No. 670.] For Week Ending November 2nd, 1901. [One Penny.

PEARSON'S SHORT STORIES

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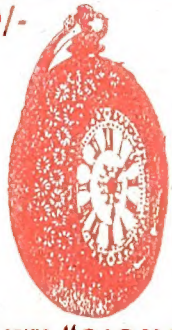

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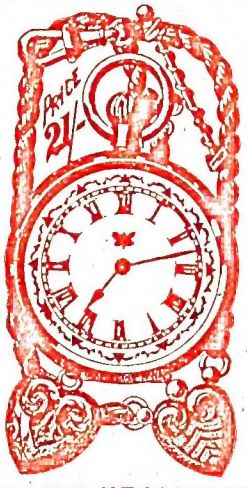

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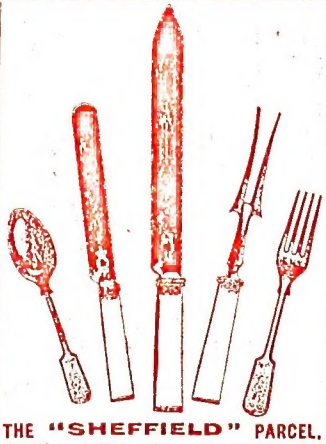

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52 Pieces, 30s. Terms: 3s. deposit with order, and 9 monthly payments of 3s.

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Also CARVER & FORK to match.

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14-carat GOLD Watch.

WARRANTED 5 YEARS.

OUR WHOLESALE PRICE TO YOU

£2 : 15 : 0

Usual Retail Price, 70s.

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The Public are warned against purchasing cheap Gold Watches, the cases of which are not of sufficient strength to protect movement.

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SHORT STORIES

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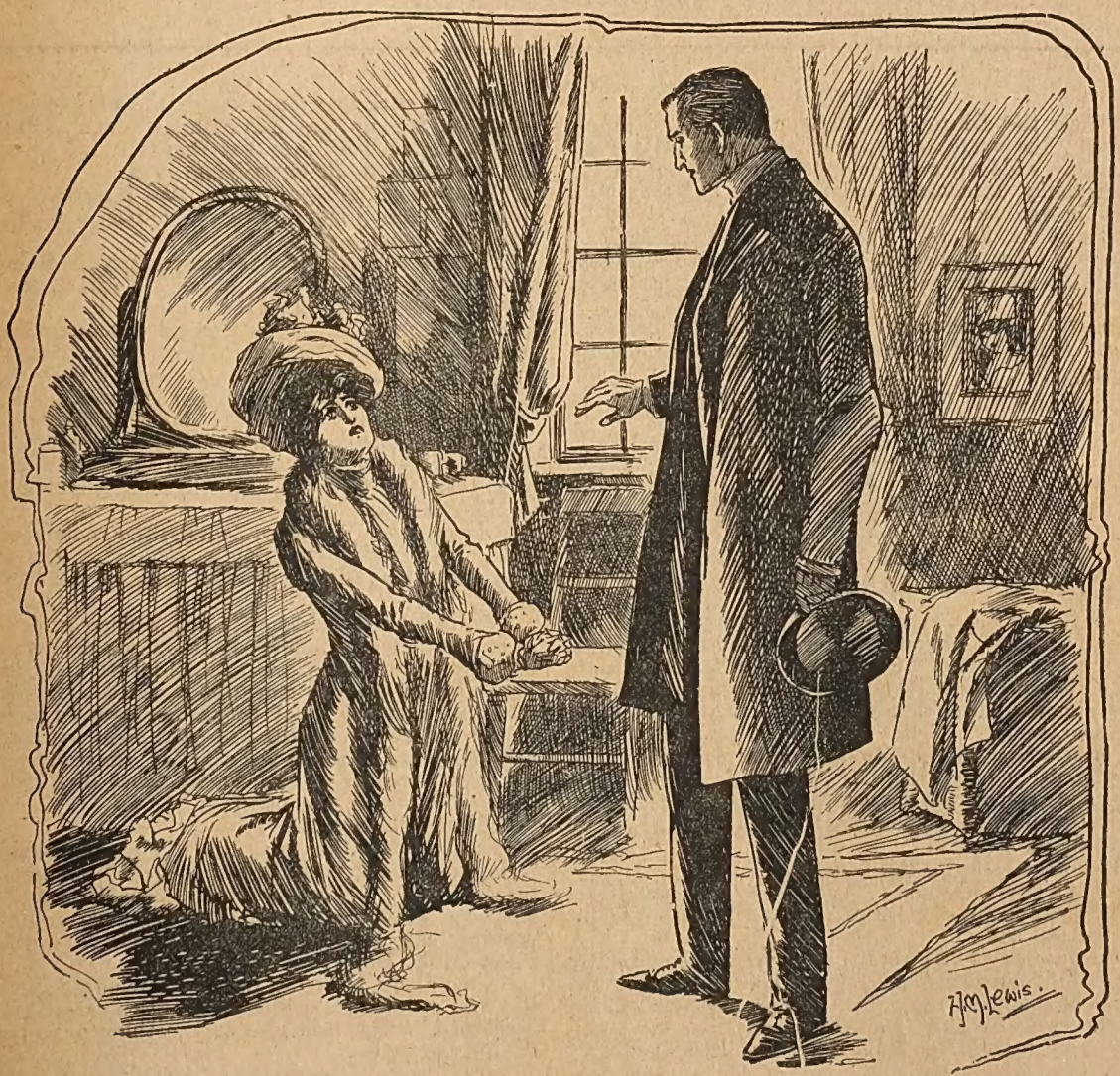
Adventures of an Actress.



In a moment the Duchess changed her front and flung herself at the young man's feet.

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THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

XIII.—THE DISGUISE OF A DUCHESS.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT the dickens does that mean?" And Frank Holmes, the stage manager of the *Good Samaritan* Company, suddenly came to a halt upon the pavement of Piccadilly, Manchester, as though he had received a blow in the face.

"Pinch me, hit me. I can't have got them again!" answered Clive Pendennis, actor, in the same company. "No, it's all right enough. What on earth does it mean?"

The two men had come to a halt opposite the hoarding upon which the following poster was prominently displayed:—

PRINCE'S THEATRE, MANCHESTER.
For Six Nights Only.
MISS HAZEL HARLOW
AND
Powerful London Company
IN
EAST LYNNE.
Miss HAZEL HARLOW as "ISABEL."

"Well, this is the rummiest go I ever struck in all the course of my theatrical career," ejaculated Holmes. "Here are we with the one and only Hazel billed to appear at the Theatre Royal, and on the top of that there's this announcement that Hazel Harlow will appear in another theatre."

"And where, in thunder, are our own bills?" cried Pendennis. "Here, there is something wrong about this, and, as luck will have it, Venables doesn't turn up this afternoon. I wonder what he will have to say to it when he appears?"

The other looked at his watch.

"Ten o'clock," he said. "Let's go to the theatre and see if there is anybody there who can throw any light on the matter."

On their way to the theatre they noticed, confronting them in flaming letters from every hoarding and on the backs of sandwich men, the announcement that Hazel Harlow would positively appear in *East Lynne*, and on that very night (Monday). They also remarked that their own posters were in meagre evidence, and were quite overshadowed by the placards advertising the *East Lynne* Company.

At the theatre they found nearly the whole company assembled, among them Hazel Harlow herself. Holmes and Pendennis both saw that they were not alone in the possession of the electrifying news.

"What on earth does it mean, Miss Harlow?" cried Holmes. "Are you doubling your *rôle* to-night, or have you found a ghost?"

"I am just as much in the dark as you are, Mr. Holmes," answered the girl. "I was just saying what a terrible pity it is that Mr. Venables is not here."

"It's the most shameless piece of effrontery I ever heard of," broke in Jenny Lovelace hotly; "that anyone should have the audacity to usurp Hazel's name. It's easy enough to see what it is—it's a put-up job."

"But whose company is it?" broke in Holmes.

"Tom Henderson's," answered one of the actors. "I think I know his crowd pretty well, and there's no one there that I know of who bears the faintest resemblance to Miss Harlow."

"Of course not," answered Jenny with a contemptuous sniff. "As I said before, it's as plain as a pike-staff; it's a put-up job to draw a crowded house for Henderson's lot."

"But what's to be done?" said Holmes in despair. As stage-manager he was excellent, but in a crisis such as this he was practically useless. All felt that Raymond Venables was the only man who would be able to cope with such a situation, and he was not expected in Manchester till the afternoon, and with him was coming Eric Monteith, to rejoin the ranks of the company he had been forced to abandon for awhile at Birmingham: (See *Short Stories* No. 666.)

Suddenly Hazel spoke.

"I know what I'm going to do," she said decisively. "I'm going round to the theatre to see if I can't see this 'Hazel Harlow.' Then, when Mr. Venables comes this afternoon we shall have something to go upon. He will probably have some idea that will enable us to get the better of Mr. Henderson and Co."

"A good idea!" cried Holmes, catching eagerly at the first straw that drifted down the current of his perplexity. "That will give us something to go on, as Miss Harlow says."

"Yes," went on the actress; "I don't want anybody to come with me. I'm going alone, incognito. I shall just ask to see 'Miss Harlow.' I'll put on a thick veil,

Read "Dead to the World."

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and if I can I'll find out who my namesake is, and anything else that may happen to crop up. Perhaps it is my double," she said, smiling; "anyhow, the idea of becoming a private detective is rather to my taste."

Jenny drew Hazel apart.

"Let me come with you, Hazel," she said.

Hazel hesitated.

"I should love you to come," she answered slowly. "But don't you think it would be easier for me to do this alone?"

"But supposing something should happen to you? Suppose there is something at the bottom of it all that means disaster to you. Supposing this is the work of your enemies—of the man Caldecott, of whom we have heard nothing for so long?"

"I'm not afraid," answered Hazel stoutly. "And I am sure, somehow, that Horace Caldecott could have no hand in this. He knows perfectly well that if he were to show his face here I would have him arrested. Sir George Chetwynd at Southampton told me not to hesitate for an instant, but to communicate with the police at once if I heard of his presence anywhere. He assured me that he would come forward and give his testimony on my behalf. And think, I am not going into any outlandish region. I am going to a theatre in broad daylight. No, Jenny, I think the real Hazel Harlow ought to tackle the false one single-handed!"

When once Hazel had made up her mind Jenny knew that argument was useless, but it was not without some feelings of misgiving that she saw her friend depart, veiled and cloaked, through the damp, foggy atmosphere of the November day on her self-imposed errand.

There were a great many people outside the "Prince's Theatre" as Hazel approached the building. Large placards were displayed with the words "Hazel Harlow is here" upon them.

Hazel made her way round to the stage-door of the theatre, where a top-hatted individual, with a clean-shaven, heavy face, was sitting in the little office adjoining the entrance.

"Can I see Miss Harlow?" said Hazel to him in a low voice.

The man stared at her with undisguised curiosity.

"What's your business?" he demanded curtly.

Hazel handed him a sealed envelope.

"Perhaps you would give her this note?" she said.

The man twirled it in his fingers for a few minutes.

"I don't know if she is in the theatre," he said at last. "If you'll wait here a minute I'll go and see."

In a short time he reappeared.

"Miss Harlow will see you," he said. "I'll take you up to her dressing-room."

He led the way up a flight of stone stairs and knocked at a door.

"Come in," cried a voice—a woman's.

The fellow threw open the door, and Hazel entered the dressing-room. It was a small apartment with a screen at one end, a table beneath the window upon which were displayed all the appurtenances of an actress's "make-up," and a few other insignificant details.

In the centre of the room a woman was standing, tall, superbly dressed and undeniably beautiful, though of that bold, pronounced type that is more or less common with women of a certain stamp in the profession.

The man shut the door and retired.

"Are you Miss Harlow?" began Hazel meekly.

"I am," answered the other defiantly; "or rather that is the name that I have elected to assume."

Hazel threw back her veil.

"But I believe I have a prior right to that name," she said, as she did so; "and, besides, the name happens to be my own. It has not been assumed for stage purposes."

The other gave vent to a contemptuous laugh.

"There's no copyright in names," she replied disdainfully. "I believe if I cared to call myself 'Ellen Terry' or 'Sarah Bernhardt,' I could do so."

"But why should you have chosen my poor insignificant name?" replied Hazel, nothing daunted by the overbearing manner of the other woman. "I suppose I ought to take it as a great compliment, but surely your conduct lays itself open to a certain amount of censure when you adopt a name that appears for the first time side by side with mine in Manchester."

"I will admit I had reasons for what I did," came the calm answer. "It suited my purpose to assume your name and there's an end of it. The situation should appeal to you. We are going to ask the people of Manchester to decide between us; see whether they prefer the Ruth of Hazel Harlow No. 1 to the Isabel of Hazel Harlow No. 2."

"Yes," broke in Hazel. "But you don't seem to have given the people of Manchester much chance. Hazel Harlow as Isabel is billed far more than the other. That seems to be rather calculated to mislead. I am perhaps vain enough to think that people will visit your theatre out of compliment to my poor name."

"I am not an advertising agent," retorted the spurious Hazel Harlow, "and if Mr. Henderson has thought fit to spend more money in advertising than your man, well, the inference is obvious. Have you nothing more to say to me?"

Hazel was nonplussed for a moment. The cool and brazen effrontery of the woman almost took her breath away. She was at a loss for an answer. The other noted her hesitation.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"You may be quite sure that we shall take steps to protect ourselves," answered the other with spirit. "The game is not played out yet."

The unknown gave vent to a mocking laugh.

"You are quite right there," she said.

At that moment a faint noise from behind caused Hazel to turn her head. A woman had sprung from behind the screen with outstretched hands. Hazel felt her own arms gripped from behind, and then a sharp prick as of a needle being inserted into the soft flesh of her forearm. She uttered a sharp cry, and turned round to grapple with her unknown assailant; then a sudden overpowering lassitude seized hold of her: her strength seemed to be ebbing quickly away; the room swam round; then she lost consciousness.

"Very neatly done, Clara," said the false Hazel. "You drove the needle in well; there's nothing like a hypodermic injection to quiet refractory people. And now we must get on with the rest of the business."

CHAPTER II.

Raymond Venables and Eric Monteith were met at the station by Frank Holmes and Jenny Lovelace, with consternation written on their faces. In as few words as possible Holmes related to Venables the astounding

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news that there was another Hazel Harlow in Manchester, with the result that the rival theatre had had unprecedented booking. But there was almost worse news than that. Hazel Harlow had disappeared. She had gone round to the theatre, and as she had not turned up within the time she had named Jenny had gone round to look for her, only to be met with the information that a lady had called to see Miss Harlow (meaning, of course, the false one) who had left almost directly after the interview.

Venables was distraught, as well he might be. It was bad enough to discover the trick of the rival company, but that Hazel had disappeared was far more serious news.

As for Eric, he had looked forward with intense longing to see Hazel once more, and now to learn that she was missing almost drove him frantic.

Eric, Venables and Jenny held a hasty council of war.

"I am sure," said Jenny, "that Hazel's disappearance is connected with the visit she made to the theatre. I tried to dissuade her from going, but she would not listen to me. What on earth can be done now?"

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," said Venables. "I'm going round to see Henderson, and to threaten proceedings. It's scandalous that he should play such a scurvy trick. As if it were possible that there were two Hazel Harlows in the world. I shouldn't be surprised if it was part and parcel of the dastardly trick that they've got Hazel shut up there so that our hands are tied as regards billing her to appear at the theatre. This scheme hasn't been hastily thought out. There's something more at the bottom of this than we know."

Accordingly Eric and Venables lost no time in going round to the rival theatre. At the entrance they paused to read the great notices billing Hazel Harlow in *East Lynne*. Venables gnashed his teeth in fury.

"Look at that," he said hoarsely. "Did you ever see anything more abominable?"

Suddenly a voice fell on Eric's ears.

"Mr. Monteith," he heard. "This is indeed a pleasant surprise." Upon the steps of the theatre a woman was standing, a tall, beautifully dressed figure. Eric looked at her in amazement.

"The Duchess of Stanchester!" he ejaculated in sheer amazement.

The woman laughed at his astonishment.

"Alias Kitty Melville," she said. "It's like old times to see you here, Mr. Monteith. Someone told me that you had taken to the boards, while I—well, you know the moth that has once singed its wings at the candle-flame always flies back to the light, and so it is with me. I mourned for Stanchester a whole year and then—well, here I am!"

Words froze on Eric's lips. Phantoms of the past rose up before him as he gazed at the beautiful figure standing there. He remembered well how in days now dead his youthful fancies had been captured by Kitty Melville, as she was then, and how the actress had responded to his boyish passion. She had sworn undying love for him, beardless Oxford boy as he was; but the glamour with which she had surrounded him soon faded, and it was with a feeling of the utmost relief he read the announcement of her marriage with the aged and decrepit Duke of Stanchester. And now the Duke was dead, and Kitty Melville had risen up before his path to remind him of what were best forgotten. But what was she doing here? Could she have any connection with the spurious Hazel Harlow who had ousted the legitimate owner of that name in Manchester?

These thoughts flashed through Eric's brain faster than they take to tell. His thoughts were centred round Hazel; where was she? Perhaps this woman could give him a key to the situation. He looked round for Venables, but the manager had disappeared somewhere. Then Eric turned to the woman.

"Can I have a few words with your Grace?" he said, in a low voice.

"Certainly, Mr. Monteith. Come up to my dressing-room. It's quite like old times to see you again." But in spite of her lightly-spoken words there was a suspicion of latent nervousness lying beneath them.

As soon as they were alone Eric turned to the Duchess.

"Perhaps you can throw some light on this mysterious Hazel Harlow No. 2," he said quietly. "Perhaps you can also give me some information as to where Hazel Harlow—the real one—is at this moment. As you know, she is a member of the company to which I have the honour to belong."

The Duchess laughed mirthlessly.

"If you must know the truth," she said, "*I* am acting under the name of Hazel Harlow. As for the young lady in whom you seem to take so great an interest, I can only say that she came and saw me here and then went away. But why do you look at me like that? Have you forgotten the old days, Eric, and all that passed between us? I only married Stanchester out of pique. You know that as well as I do. My heart was always yours, and always will be. If you knew how I had been longing to see you, and to hear from your own lips that you had not forgotten me——"

But Eric put up his hand with an imploring gesture.

"How can your Grace speak like that?" he said coldly. "The past is long since dead. It is surely but little use to rake amongst the embers of a forgotten folly."

"Folly!" echoed the actress with heaving bosom and face aflame; "then you mean to say that you were not in earnest, or is it that I have grown plainer and older in these years that have passed since we met? Ah, I see what it is," she continued, with rising passion, "it is this Hazel Harlow that has come between us. You have been captivated by her pretty looks, and are ready to forget all the love words you uttered to Kitty Melville. It is for her—a country chit—that you would throw over a woman's love."

Eric was too dumfounded to find a ready answer to this stormy flood of words. It seemed incredible that he could have ever cared for this woman, or have fancied that he did, and it was incredible that she could make so much copy out of what had been, after all, only a youthful flirtation on his part.

"I regret exceedingly," he said at last, "to find that my past actions have been so misconstrued. I will own that I was in the wrong to have flirted with you, but I never for one moment imagined that you had taken my boyish actions so strongly to heart. I assure you that my regret is indeed deep, and yet I fail to see why you should have impersonated Hazel Harlow as you have done, or why you should take notice of the fact that I am her lover. I admit that I do love her, and if I ever marry, she is the only girl I ever will marry. I own that I have come here hoping to find where she was, for she has disappeared, and it is known that she came here to visit you."

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Photo Competition.

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"I have cheated the gallows!" she murmured faintly

A terrible look came into the woman's eyes as she heard this frank avowal, for, to give her her due, all her passionate nature was concentrated on Eric Monteith. In her case absence had indeed made the heart grow fonder.

"If that is your last word, then," she said hoarsely, "go and find Hazel Harlow, and I wish you luck. I don't know where she is and I care less."

In his heart Eric felt that the woman was lying. He felt instinctively that she did know where her innocent rival was; that she had, indeed, taken some steps to wreak her vengeance on the girl who had come between Eric and herself; that this adoption of Hazel's name was part and parcel of her plot. Eric knew that all the vast wealth of the Duke of Stanchester had come to the old nobleman's relict, and that the son of the Duke by his first wife had been practically left a pauper at his father's death. Yet what could he do? He had no proof to back up his belief that there had been foul play. The Duchess was an unscrupulous and a clever woman. She had probably laid her plans with a deep forethought.

"And if I tell you that I do not believe you?" he said curtly. "That I am of opinion that you *do* know where Hazel Harlow is? I shall take all the steps in my power to elucidate the mystery of her disappearance. What will you do then?"

The actress' eyes gleamed.

"Do your worst," she muttered. "I deny that I have any hand in the affair, and you have no proof to the contrary."

"No, but I will find proof. I see how great your boasted love for me is that you can wound me in my tenderest part, and hope by such methods to turn my affections from one who is purity and goodness personified."

His words had an unlooked-for effect. In a moment the Duchess changed her front and flung herself at the young man's feet.

"Don't turn from me like that, Eric," she wailed. "Why won't you give up this girl? I tell you that I love you with all my heart and soul. Is it nothing to you that I am the Duchess of Stanchester, that I am possessed of great wealth? Am I so unpleasing to look upon? Surely I am not altogether hideous or undesirable?"

But such self-abandonment had only the effect of increasing Eric's distaste for this unwelcome lover.

"Your Grace surely forgets yourself!" he said with difficulty; "it is unwomanly of you to abase yourself

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so before me. Heaven knows that you are beautiful and attractive enough, but love cannot be bought. It must be spontaneous, and besides, I cannot reconcile myself to the fact which you assert—that you do not know what has become of Hazel Harlow. I cannot help but think that you know where she is, and I cannot hold with your taking her name. There is no excuse for so wilful an assumption of another's reputation."

"And why not?" cried the Duchess, rising to her feet. "All is fair in love and war! Well, I have done for you what I would do for no other man. I have unsexed myself and for nothing. I bid you go!"

But Eric felt that the last word lay with him.

"Then you absolutely deny that you know where Hazel Harlow is?"

"Yes," came the defiant answer. "Go out into the streets of Manchester and look for her."

In the meanwhile Venables had been endeavouring to gain an audience with Henderson, the manager of the *East Lynne* Company, and to demand an explanation of the extensive billing of the name of Hazel Harlow.

But Henderson was not to be found. In other words, the badger refused to be drawn. Venables was beside himself with rage and mortification. In the first place Hazel had disappeared; and secondly, there seemed no way of counteracting the wily plans of his adversary. The blow had fallen so unexpectedly, and so much money must have been expended to gull the people of Manchester, that it must be some time before the evil could be counteracted.

Venables threatened injunctions and metaphorically shook the law in the face of Henderson's minions, who listened imperturbably to his railings. The day was getting on, the bookings for *East Lynne* were unprecedented, and—to crown all—the real Hazel Harlow had disappeared. Neither was there any evidence to show that Mr. Henderson had any hand in her disappearance. Everybody in the rival theatre was unanimous that a veiled lady had appeared that morning to interview the Duchess of Stanchester, and had left the theatre shortly afterwards. The Duchess had indeed laid her plans well.

Venables rushed out of the theatre breathing vows of vengeance, and almost ran into the arms of Eric returning from his fruitless quest. The two hastily compared notes.

"What are you going to do?" asked Eric.

"Do!" cried Venables. "There is only one thing we can do. Get out bills to the effect that the *East Lynne* people are advertising a spurious Hazel Harlow, and to offer a huge reward for the recovery of our own lead. That's what blues the whole concern, and makes me feel so unspeakably wretched, as I am sure it must you. To think that Hazel has gone, Heaven knows where, to say nothing of the fact that had we got her here we would be able to hoist Henderson's crowd with their own petard. As it is, upon my word, I don't know what we can do. I wonder if there is a smart detective in Manchester to whom we can turn. Anyhow, I think I'll go round to the police and put the case before them."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when Eric felt a hand upon his shoulder. He wheeled round, to be confronted by a somewhat ragged individual.

"How do you do, Mr. Monteith?" said a voice that sounded strangely familiar.

Eric stared at the man in astonishment.

"Who on earth are you?" he cried.

The man laughed.

"Ah, you don't recognise me in this get-up," he said. "Don't you remember a little affair at Rugby where we ran a very pleasing scoundrel to earth?"

Light suddenly dawned on Eric's brain.

"Kempton Bond!" he ejaculated.

"Not so loud," answered the detective. "So you recognise me?"

"What brings you to Manchester?" muttered Eric. "You are just the very man I want."

"If you'll come with me I'll tell you," answered Bond. "I shall be very pleased to help you if I can."

He led the way to a quiet hotel in Corporation Street, in a private room of which the three men soon found themselves snugly ensconced.

"And now," said Bond. "I'll tell you why I have come to Manchester. It is in connection with a little affair concerning Her Grace the Duchess of Stanchester."

"The Duchess of Stanchester!" said Venables, "alias Kitty Melville!"

"Yes," answered Bond, "also alias Hazel Harlow."

"So it's she!" cried Venables. "What on earth is her game?"

The detective smiled.

"Her game is nearly up," he answered grimly. "Do you gentlemen care to hear a little story?"

Both assented eagerly.

"You will probably remember," said the detective, "that his Grace the Duke of Stanchester died somewhat suddenly after a short illness, leaving the bulk of his property to his widow. By a will that was only a few days old, and that he would very probably have altered had he lived, the present Duke, then known as the Marquis of Saundersfoot, was left practically a pauper, and it was not till some time after that he made the discovery that there was a mystery surrounding the death of his august father. The Marquis, like many other young scions of nobility, had gone the pace a bit, and had been foolish enough to flirt with his stepmother's maid. This woman admitted to him one day, after a champagne supper, that the Duchess had resolved to become possessed of her husband's entire fortune by fair means or foul. Then came his father's sudden death and the disappearance of the maid afore-mentioned. For some time he took no action in the matter, but among some old rubbish that had belonged to the maid he discovered a small bottle containing the dregs of a particularly insidious poison. His suspicions were aroused, and he communicated with me. Since then I have been on the track of that maid, and I have only just succeeded in running her to earth. She has again entered the employ of the Duchess of Stanchester."

"Then you think that the Duchess poisoned the old Duke?" asked Eric in a horror-stricken voice.

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Such things have been done," he said quietly. "But what is this business about which you wish to ask me?"

"Why, that the real Miss Hazel Harlow has disappeared," replied Monteith, and he related to the detective all that he knew about the matter, telling pretty fully his interview with the Duchess only a short time previously.

"So that's how the wind blows," cried Kempton Bond. "That simplifies matters exceedingly. What do you say to paying another visit to the Duchess of Stanchester in company with me, Mr. Monteith? If that lady has had any hand in the disappearance of Miss Harlow, I think we shall be able to kill two birds with one stone. If we

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can force her hand the game is ours, and there's no need to prosecute any further search for the missing maid-servant."

Kempton Bond spoke with confidence, and both Venables and Monteith felt that Providence had given them a most unexpected way out of their difficulty. Venables looked at his watch.

"It's five o'clock now," he said. "We've not too much time."

"Time enough," answered the detective coolly. "If we can only find her Grace the battle is as good as won. Mind you, I don't say positively she did poison the old gentleman, but the servant's words and the discovery of the phial ought to go a long way to clearing up the matter. And, depend upon it, her Grace would do a good deal to keep her name from being dragged up into public notice as a murdress. And, mind you, the facts are pretty strong. The only wonder is they didn't create more comment at the time. The Duke makes a brand new will, dies within a few days of it, and the servant disappears almost immediately after his death. Anyhow, it's enough for Kempton Bond to go on. But this new move of hers is a caution." He threw a sly glance at Eric. "There's some saying about 'a woman scorned,' I believe, Mr. Monteith," he said.

Eric coloured.

"At any rate," he said stoutly, "I don't see that I have anything to blame myself with."

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Eric and the detective went round to the theatre it was to discover that the Duchess was not there. Neither would the officials at the theatre give her private address in Manchester. This was a check that Kempton Bond had foreseen. He accordingly determined to wait about until her Grace should appear.

Venables had not been idle. He had had huge placards put outside the theatre to the effect that owing to the indisposition of the genuine Miss Hazel Harlow her part would be filled that night by an understudy. Underneath the notice was the following sentence in smaller type:

"Miss Hazel Harlow achieved her first and only success in *The Good Samaritan*, and has appeared in the part of Ruth with unprecedented success in most of the large towns in England. In spite of all assertions to the contrary, Miss Hazel Harlow will appear in no other play save *The Good Samaritan*. The public are warned against being gulled by any misleading statement."

This notice was put into being at the advice of Kempton Bond, for the detective had assured Venables that if his surmises were correct, he need have little fear that Hazel had been put out of the way. He was convinced that although the Duchess of Stanchester had had a hand in her abduction, she would not dare to go to the extreme of silencing Hazel for ever.

And with this Venables had to be content.

About an hour before the curtain was due to be rung up at the Prince's Theatre on the first act of *East Lynne*, the Duchess of Stanchester, alias Hazel Harlow, turned up at the theatre with her maid. It was a dark foggy evening, and as she stepped from her carriage on to the kerb she was startled by the appearance of two men who confronted her in silence. With a thrill, she recognised one of them as being Eric Monteith, the other as a dapper, well-groomed stranger, unfamiliar to her. It was indeed Kempton Bond.

"I must have a word with you, your Grace," said Eric breathlessly. "I beg of you that you will grant my request."

The Duchess hesitated. Her eyes went from the one to the other of the two men. "I thought you had said all there was to say to me," she replied haughtily.

"So did I," answered Eric quickly. "But since I saw you last something has happened that makes it absolutely imperative that I should have a few moments conversation with you."

Again the actress hesitated. Then her infatuation for Monteith got the better of her quickly born suspicions that everything was not as it should be as regards dealings between herself and Eric.

"I can give you a few minutes," she said, in a low voice, "but——"

She broke off abruptly and looked fixedly at Bond.

The detective took off his hat with a low bow.

"I can wait for you here, Monteith," he said airily; "I don't suppose your business will take you very long."

His eyes turned to the maid who was standing behind her mistress. He looked fixedly at her for a few moments, and then drew aside, but there was nothing in his action to arouse suspicion in the girl that he was other than an ordinary individual.

"Come up to my room," said the Duchess, turning to Monteith.

The young man obeyed her in silence, trying to hide the turmoil that raged within his breast. When they were alone the woman shut the door and turned towards him.

"What is it you have to say to me?" she said in a low voice.

Eric hesitated. It was some few moment before he could find his voice. Then he said:

"The business that brings me here hinges upon the conversation that I had with you a few hours ago. Since then I have learnt something that has put into my hands a terrible weapon, and one that I must use against your Grace in view of what has gone before." He paused. The woman's face went deathly white. Her eyes were fixed with terrible intensity upon Eric's face.

"What do you mean?" she muttered hoarsely.

The position was a trying one for Eric. Words seemed to stick in his throat. It was with the utmost effort that he continued. "When I last saw you you told me that you did not know where Hazel Harlow was. Do you still adhere to that statement?"

"I do," came the answer, faint yet defiant.

"Then there is no need for me to beat about the bush further. To put the blunt, terrible truth before you, you are on the eve of being arrested for being concerned in the death of the late Duke of Stanchester!"

A cry of horror fell from the woman's lips, and an expression of deadly fear came into her face.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"What I say; and I tell you that unless you reveal to me the whereabouts of Hazel Harlow steps will be taken to have you arrested immediately."

"What proof have you of this? It is merely a trumped-up story to get me to renounce once and for always every chance of winning your love," and the infatuated woman gazed despairingly at the pale, stern face before her.

"The proof is incontestable," answered Eric firmly; "but it is not for me to dwell any more explicitly on the dreadful facts that have been adduced as evidence of your guilt. It is not for me to judge whether you are

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really guilty or innocent. What I am concerned in is to see justice done to one who has never done you an atom of harm--I mean Hazel Harlow!"

A moan came from the lips of the Duchess. For a minute or so she made no answer. Her eyes were fixed on the man's face. She seemed to be reading his very soul. At last she spoke.

"Heaven knows," she said, "how you have found out anything at all about the past. I will not deny or admit that I am guilty, but this much I will admit. I do know the whereabouts of Hazel Harlow, and I will take you to her. Believe me or not as you like, I only played this desperate game to see whether I had absolutely and utterly lost your love. The scheme of impersonating Hazel Harlow was mine. It was my money that bought over Henderson, lock, stock and barrel, to fall in with my plans; but I see that it was all for nothing, and remember, Eric, that whatever happens, it was all for love of you. I was ready to go to any length to obtain your heart." Then a slight shudder shook her frame. "I only married Stanchester out of pique and attracted by the wealth and position he could give me; and now I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take you this moment to where Hazel Harlow is."

Eric could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses. He had expected defiance, scorn, perhaps tears, but that the woman should have thus capitulated so easily must point to one of two facts: either that there was truth in the accusation preferred against her that she had been party to the death of her husband, or that she realized that the mad scheme she had conceived to oust Hazel from the public eye and from Eric's affections was doomed to failure. Yet the denouement of her surrender was yet to be enacted.

"Who is that man below?" suddenly asked the actress in a low voice. "Ah, you needn't tell me. He is a police agent. Well, what does it matter? The game is up. I've had my fling. Let's go at once." Then she laughed mirthlessly. "We'll leave Henderson to make what explanations he can, for I shan't come back here to-night, there is no fear of that."

She went to the door and bade Eric follow her. On the threshold she paused, and, turning, fixed her brilliant eyes upon his face.

"Eric," she said brokenly, "will you give me one kiss in token of forgiveness? It's all I ask, and Hazel Harlow need never know." The last words were spoken in a tone of unutterable bitterness. Before Eric could answer she leant forward and throwing her arms round his neck, imprinted a burning kiss upon his lips. Then she hurried down the stairs closely followed by Monteith.

Kempton Bond was waiting quietly outside the stage-door smoking a cigarette. He expressed no surprise as he saw the two issue from the theatre. The Duchess, without a glance in his direction, set off hurriedly, walking down the murky street, the two men following closely at her heels. She kept on for some time and then turned down a side street. At a house at the end of this she stopped, and taking a latch-key from her pocket, inserted it in the lock of the door and preceded her companions into a dimly-lighted hallway.

Without a pause, as though desirous of getting through with the business before her with all possible expedition, she mounted the stairs that led up to the higher parts of the house, and at last stopped before a green baize door on a landing upon the topmost storey. This door opened into a small passage-way with another door at the end of it. This was locked, and the Duchess knocked smartly upon its panels.

"Come in," said a quiet voice that Eric recognised in a moment as Hazel's. The Duchess threw open the door and admitted the two men into a long airy apartment tastefully furnished with a skylight of frosted glass upon a sloping ceiling above. A standard lamp with a red shade was lit in the corner, a cheerful fire gleamed in the grate, there were books scattered about. In fact, a more cheery, cosy prison, for a prison indeed it was, it would have been hard to imagine.

"Miss Harlow," said the Duchess, in a firm voice, "I have brought some friends to see you. Your imprisonment is over."

Hazel uttered a cry of joy and ran towards Eric with outstretched hands.

"Again my saviour!" she cried gratefully.

Monteith took hold of the girl's white supple hands with a thrill of pleasure. The Duchess had thrown herself into a chair and sat regarding the young couple with eyes that blazed like living coals from out of her pale face. Bond stood near the door with folded arms, his eyes never leaving the countenance of her Grace the Duchess of Stanchester.

Suddenly the latter sprang to her feet.

"Wait a minute," she said, "the last act of the play is still to be played out." She turned with an imperious gesture to Kempton Bond.

"Mr. Policeman, or whatever you are," she said scornfully, "what I am going to say will probably interest you more than these two young lovers. I believe you are here to arrest me for being mixed up in the death of the Duke of Stanchester. Well, let me save you trouble. I'll tell you the whole story of how the Duke died. He had always been a fast liver, and his system had been undermined by long years of riotous living. He was taken violently ill and the doctor who came to see him said that he might flicker out any moment like the flame of a candle. Needless to say, he did not tell this to the Duke, he only told me. I went to his Grace, informed him that he was suffering only from a trivial ailment, and that the doctor had assured me that with a little careful nursing he would soon be on his legs again. Strange as it may seem"—this with a quick look at Eric—"the Duke doted on me. He was ready to gratify my every whim. I then told him that his son, the present Duke, had contracted a marriage with a person of low descent, and by various misrepresentations induced my husband to make a fresh will leaving practically everything to me, and only the title, as was of course inevitable, and a paltry pittance to his heir. Then—I had been assured, mind you, that the Duke's days were numbered—I sent my maid-servant to purchase some poison. I administered this to the Duke in his medicine. My servant was absolutely guiltless. I say this before witnesses so that there can be no possible mistake about my statement."

A low cry of horror burst simultaneously from Hazel and Eric, Kempton Bond alone remained perfectly unmoved.

"Is your Grace ready to put your signature to a written confession?" he said in a low voice.

"Perfectly," answered the Duchess, with almost incredible coolness.

Kempton Bond took a stylographic pen from his pocket, and with the pen of a ready writer, transmitted the deposition he had just heard to writing.

Read "Dead to the World."

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It was Hazel herself who went before the curtain.

"And now your signature here," he said. When his task was done with unswerving coolness, "and then I'll get Mr. Monteith to add his signature to mine as witness of the deposition."

The Duchess glanced quickly down the lucidly written statement. At a blank space at the bottom of the page she signed her name, "Katharine Stanchester," and not a stroke of her pen showed the faintest indecision or hesitation.

Kempton Bond then took the pen and prepared to add his name to the document. Suddenly the Duchess turned her back and her hand went to her face. Then came the sound of breaking glass, and it was seen that she had hurled a little bottle across the room which struck the wall sharply and fell in fragments on the carpet. With a cry of horror Eric sprang forward; there was a smile on the woman's lips.

"I have cheated the gallows," she murmured faintly. Then her whole body swayed like a tree in a storm. With a gurgling cry she fell forward into Eric's arms—a lifeless corpse.

CHAPTER IV.

STRANGE as it may appear no one at the Prince's Theatre had noted the disappearance of the Duchess of Stanchester from her room, and until within a few minutes of the rise of the curtain everyone believed she was in her dressing-room. A fact that added colour to this was found in that her maid who acted as her dresser had been seen to enter her apartments some time before. The call-boy was sent on his round, and the stage was at last kept waiting for Isabel, who, it will be remembered, was billed as being enacted by Hazel Harlow. The theatre was crammed, as was indeed the rival house, the Queen's, for the knowledge that there were two Hazel Harlow's in Manchester had acted as a powerful spur to the citizens to investigate the meaning of so extraordinary a coincidence.

Venables had frankly given out that his Miss Hazel Harlow was indisposed, but Henderson had no such statement to fall back upon. He was too far involved for that. His unscrupulous conduct was, indeed, to be the means of his reaping the whirlwind. It was speedily discovered that the Duchess of Stanchester's dressing-room was empty. Here was a terrible quandary. Henderson was at his wit's end. The substitution of the Duchess's understudy as Hazel Harlow would spell absolute failure to the deception, for the Duchess was a woman of undoubtedly fine presence and wonderful acting powers. It was by reason of this that the *East Lynne* Company had pledged themselves to so unscrupulous an undertaking. Henderson tore his hair metaphorically, and gave wild orders for the orchestra to perform yet another selection in view of the possible return of the lost Duchess.

Suddenly a cab dashed up to the door of the theatre, and a man leapt out. It was Kempton Bond who demanded to see Henderson without a moment's delay.

The manager, clutching at the last straw of hope that the detective's arrival gave him, took Bond into his private sanctum.

"A pretty kettle of fish you've prepared for yourself," said the detective grimly, "and when you've heard me out you will be the best judge of what you're to do in the matter. How you could have been such a fool as to try and palm off her late Grace the Duchess of Stanchester as Hazel Harlow surpasses my understanding, as it must surpass the understanding of every sane-minded individual."

"But where is the Duchess?" muttered Henderson hoarsely, his flustered comprehension failing to take in the detective's ominous meaning conveyed in the words, "the late Duchess."

"The Duchess of Stanchester," came the grave answer, "has been called to a higher tribunal. She has made her last bow on the world's stage."

"Dead!" gasped the manager. "Do you mean to say she is *dead?*"

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In answer, the detective flung down the deposition signed by the miserable woman who had gone to her last account.

"The Duchess died by her own hand," he said calmly; "after having first witnessed the authenticity of this terrible confession."

A paroxysm of fear seized Henderson as he read the document.

"What can I do? What can I do?" he wailed. "The stage waits: the theatre is packed; the audience will lynch me if they don't see her. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Do," came the contemptuous answer; "be a man for once in your life. Tell the truth; admit that you have played a dastardly trick. It's all you can do."

"I daren't!" whined the craven, fear-stricken man.

"Then I will!"

"You!"

"Yes, I."

And without another word Kempton Bond left the room and made his way round to the back of the curtain. Here all was dismay and confusion. Everybody seemed at their wits' ends. At the wings were clustered actors and actresses, scene-shifters and supernumeries, all talking together in low, constrained voices.

"I knew we should get landed over this," Bond heard one of the actors murmuring to a companion; "and now her Grace has gone and let us down nicely."

Bond threw him a contemptuous glance, then, brushing aside those who would bar his path, he made his way to the front of the curtain, and before anyone could raise a hand to stop him, or had, indeed, realized what he was about to do, he had stepped boldly out before the footlights and put up his hand to the leader of the orchestra in token that he should stop playing.

The apparition of this dapper, well-dressed man who had so coolly come forward had its effect upon the crowded house. All eyes were turned to the figure of the detective. The orchestra stopped with a final flourish, and Bond, clearing his voice, began as follows:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I must beg of your forbearance for a few minutes, for I have something to say which will be as painful to me to utter as it will be for you to listen to. In the first place, I must tell you that I am in no way connected with this theatre, or with the lessees of it. I am merely here in the interests of truth and justice. It has been extensively placarded all over Manchester that Miss Hazel Harlow, the actress who won her name in the *Good Samaritan* Company, would appear in this theatre to-night in *East Lynne*. Now the name of Hazel Harlow is not a common one. People on seeing that name would naturally connect it with the young and beautiful actress who has won so much fame for herself in a totally different *rôle*. I am not at liberty to reveal to you the full story of how it comes that I am here speaking to you to-night, but I must tell you this—there can be no performance in this theatre to-night, for the lady who had assumed the part of Isabel under the name of Hazel Harlow is dead!"

The detective paused. A cry of horror went up from the audience, who had listened spellbound to the detective's words. Raising his hand to enjoin silence, he went on: "In view of the terrible occurrence I beg of you all to make no demonstration. The money will be returned to all who have purchased seats for to-night's performance." And, with a final bow, he slipped back as quietly as he had come.

In the quiet room where the Duchess had put the consummation to the follies of her life were the minions of the law. Eric and Hazel had hurried round to the theatre just in time to stop Venables from commencing the performance. It was Hazel herself who went before the curtain as Bond had done at the other theatre, and told the audience that there could be no performance that night for reasons that would be explained in to-morrow's daily paper. It had, indeed, been a terrible conclusion to a terrible day.

The *Manchester Guardian* of the next morning devoted nearly three columns to the tragic story that it was inevitable should become public property. The story of how Hazel was abducted had best be told in the very words which appeared in the paper.

"When Miss Harlow paid a visit to the miserable woman who had so flagrantly impersonated her, it was only to be trapped in the most dastardly fashion. The servant of the late Duchess sprang upon her and ran a needle into her arm containing an injection of morphia. Miss Harlow was smuggled out of the theatre and conveyed away in a cab to a house that the Duchess had taken, and where, later on, the unhappy woman put the crowning end to her actions by committing suicide. The maid-servant had attempted later on to escape, but she was shadowed by detectives who had long wanted her in connection with the death of his late Grace the Duke of Stanchester, and she was apprehended. But what seems to us almost as serious a matter is that a whole theatrical company should have been so easily suborned to fall in with the fell plans of the Duchess of Stanchester to bring about Miss Harlow's discomfiture. We sincerely hope Mr. Henderson and his accomplices will not be allowed to go off scot free. What the Duchess intended to do with her captive we shall never know. In all probability she intended to keep her in durance vile until the conclusion of the *East Lynne* Company's visit to Manchester. Our sympathy is given unrestrainedly to Miss Harlow. We congratulate her most heartily on having come out of her dangers with comparatively so little hurt. . . ."

It was not till some time afterwards that the full story of how the old Duke of Stanchester had met his death transpired. When it did another thrill of horror ran through the minds of the public to think that Hazel Harlow had fallen into the hands of so abandoned a murderess. Yet the Duchess of Stanchester was not all bad. She was one of those strange combinations of good and evil, a woman who knew no half measures. It must be either whole-hearted love or utter hate with her, and there was no doubt at all that the mad infatuation she had conceived and cherished so long for Eric Monteith had a good deal to answer for the final crowning madness with which she consummated her stormy life.

Yet in this surely Eric must be held blameless. There is probably no young man in the world who has not at one time or another been attracted solely and simply by the face of a beautiful woman without probing deeper for those attributes that must be present if the heart is to be given to a worthy object.

Henderson took refuge in flight. Manchester speedily became too hot to hold him. The company broke up and drifted Londonwards, to hang about outside the doors of agents, and to pick up what crumbs they could that fell to their lot as actors and actresses who had been connected with a company that had come to so ignominous an end.

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Photo Competition.

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TEST OF THE HEART.

JONES advised me not to marry her—he said that she was too young and pretty.

Farnum advised me to remain an old bachelor—told me a man past forty simply made a fool of himself by matrimony.

Tewksbury—a man who is notorious for never minding his own business—told me she had had a love affair with Harry Birmingham before he went south.

Allen shook his head and said Clara Myers might be very pretty, but he liked somebody maturer and more settled. (N.B.—He married his housekeeper the next week, and she is mature enough for Methuselah himself!)

Everybody thought I was trying a dangerous experiment, but I didn't pretend to suit everybody, so I simply suited myself. I went quietly to church with Clara Myers and married her one glorious January morning, when the eaves of old St. Paul's were fringed with glittering icicles. She was nineteen and I was nine-and-thirty. She was as beautiful as a rose-bud, with a shy, pretty way, like a timid child, and I am a rough old codger, sound enough at heart, but, like a winter apple, unpromising on the exterior. In short, we were as unlike as May and November. The next day I made a will and bequeathed all my property unconditionally to my wife.

"Are you sure you are doing a wise thing, Mr. Folliott?" said Mardyn, the lawyer, pushing his blue spectacles up on his forehead, until he looked like a bald old gnome with a double pair of eyes. "You see, she is very much younger than yourself, and——"

"Please be so kind as to mind your own business," said I brusquely. "Don't be offended, Mardyn; but really people seem to suppose I am not able to attend to my own affairs!"

"Just as you please, sir—just as you please," said Mardyn, in a rage. "I am a mere tool in your hands!"

"That's it, exactly," said I. So I signed the will and went home to Clara.

"Oh, Paul, you must not die!" said Clara, with a scared look, when I told her what I had done. "Nobody ever loved me as truly and generously as you have done, and I don't know what I should do if you were taken away!"

"There was young Birmingham, if all reports were true——" I mischievously remarked.

"A mere butterfly," she said, haughtily, "without either brains or principle! Paul, Paul, I have found a shelter in your true, loving heart, and I mean to nestle there always!"

And then she cried—this foolish, soft-hearted little wife of mine.

So things went on until the firm of which I was managing partner needed to send someone to Calcutta to see after a turbaned scoundrel of an agent, who had absconded with more money than we could well afford to lose. Morrison was old and feeble. Hewitt's wife lay very ill, so I was the one to go. I kissed Clara good-bye as cheerfully as I could, fully expecting to be back in three months or so. But you know the old French adage: "L'homme propose et Dieu dispose!"

I had to follow the agent up into the mountains of India. I fell ill of one of those burning climatic fevers in the bungalow of an old native priest, and the months flew by until it was more than a year before I found myself on the deck of the *Blue-Eyed Mary*, steaming up the dear old Thames. And all this time Clara had never heard a word from me.

I had written to her to prepare her for what seemed almost like my rising from the dead, but I had afterwards found my letters in the pocket of the neglectful native servant who had undertaken to deliver the mails to the Calcutta office.

"But it doesn't matter so much now," I thought; "she will be more than delighted, poor little girl!"

And then a cold chill seemed to creep through my veins, like November's wind breathing across a bed of flowers!

I turned into a restaurant, where I had been wont to go in the days of my bachelorhood, and slunk into a dark corner; the twilight was just falling and I was sheltered by the partition.

Hush! That was Tewksbury's voice, harsh and jarring as of old.

"Just what might have been expected," said Tewksbury. "Pretty young widows don't go begging in this market."

"Folliott might have known it," growled old Farnum. "Poor Folliott! There were some very good points about him, too. Sad thing that—very sad thing."

"We must all die," said Tewksbury, gravely.

"Yes; but a fellow would naturally prefer dying in his bed to being carried off by an East Indian fever and buried in the jungles."

I shuddered. Had I then come home to my own funeral, as it were?

"And she's going to marry young Birmingham, after all!" added Farnum.

The paper dropped from my hand.

"I could have told Folliott so when I heard what a confoundedly idiotic will he had made!" said Tewksbury. "So gold has fallen again. Just my luck; I sold out to-night!"

I stayed to hear no more, but staggered out into the darkness with one idea whirling through my dizzy brain—my Clara was mine no longer!

It was quite true what Tewksbury had said. I might have anticipated some such end. She was too young, too lovely for such a rough old fellow as I was. My widow—what a curious sensation the words gave me as I mentally pronounced them!

Under my own windows, with a ruby-red light shining through wine-coloured damask curtains, I stood feeling as Rip Van Winkle might have felt in the play—like a dead man walking the earth once more. Voices and lights were within.

The drawing-room door was ajar. Clara herself stood before the fire, in deep black robes. Directly opposite stood Harry Birmingham.

"Clara, Clara!" he cried. "You surely are not in earnest. You will reconsider."

"My answer is final," she responded. "The time might once have been when you fancied I had a childish liking for you, Harry Birmingham; but that time has long since passed away. I gave my heart to the best and noblest man that ever breathed—Paul Folliott—and in his grave it is forever buried. I loved him once; I shall love him into eternity! I never was half worthy of him——"

And Clara's voice was choked with sobs.

How I ever got into the room I cannot tell to this day—neither can she. But I know that young Birmingham somehow disappeared, and I was standing with Clara clasped to my breast—the happiest man that ever breathed God's blessed air.

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MISTRESS OF HIS FATE.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," &c.

CHAPTER I.

A Triangular Discussion.

"It's no use arguing, Hammond, you've got to turn out; your lease of the ground is up, and I want the mill for a tenant who will put some life into the business and not go to sleep over it. Why should you grumble? You've had a couple of renewals since my uncle joined the majority seven years ago."

"You're hard, Mr. Mostyn," was the answer; "very hard! I've run the place for a quarter of a century—Rufus there was a weanling babe when I first got possession. My wife died here, sir, and lies buried in yonder churchyard; it will be like losing her again to bid Oakenarch farewell, for that's what it means."

Jasper Hammond's strong palms clenched, and his quivering mouth set under his grey beard. He was a stout personage in dusty-white garments, with a square linen cap on his sparse locks. He had uttered his nervous, almost tearful, sentences to an accompaniment of splashing water—the murmur of the great mill at work in the pent current of the mill stream.

"I can't establish another mill, you see, sir," he continued, "even if I could secure a water-right—rebuilding this after the fire nigh beggared me. Twelve months back, come Hallow E'en, I paid the last of the money I borrowed, and not a penny have I been able to save in addition."

"That's your own fault," he was told bluntly; "had you taken care to be insured you would have been better off, not worse, for your blaze. I am quite decided, Hammond—you will leave by Christmas." And the speaker twisted on his heel, as though to cross the small paddock on the river bank, and make for the horse that was tethered to a post of the entrance-gate. But a hand was laid on his shoulder and he halted.

Thus checked, the implacable Mr. Mostyn beheld a figure taller and slighter than the miller's, yet giving promise of a superior strength and activity. The countenance of this new participator in the dispute was clean-shaven and intelligent, his gaze cool and resolute. An air of cultured independence seemed to hang about him. Nevertheless, he bore a marked resemblance to the dusty, grey-bearded man at his side.

"A moment, Mr. Gerald Mostyn," he observed; "is yours the final word on the subject? Does Miss Brereton know we are being sent adrift, that were her father's tenants before her, and have paid the Breretons many a hundred pounds in honest gold? Rumour says she is a kind-hearted young creature; was it she who refused us a proper renewal of our lease, so that the ground-rent might be raised on us twice in six years, till it stands at double what satisfied Mr. Brereton? I judge it rather to have been the act of a grasping, egotistical jack-in-office."

"Rufus! Rufus!" exclaimed the miller, horrified; "you forget yourself, my son. Pray pardon him, Mr. Mostyn—he loves me and the mill, and has his mother's quick tongue and hot temper. She was a bit above me, you may have heard, sir, and the lad has good blood in him."

Gerald Mostyn sneered. He was a familiar type, spare, smartly dressed, precise, with a reddish-brown moustache and an insolent half-smile.

"A truce to apologies, Mr. Hammond," he said; "it is sufficient for you to appreciate that I act on Miss Brereton's account. Your son is not her tenant—let him stick to his wood-carving hobby; I care nothing for his long tongue, be it his or his mother's. As you appear to have suffered from it in both cases I wonder you did not tame the lady, and teach the cub manners."

The warm flush ebbed from Rufus Hammond's cheeks, their pallor showing darkly through his tan. A fist closed, and a right arm shot out; Gerald Mostyn was caught on the point of the jaw and lifted into a patch of nettles that filled a corner of the paddock. A spring, and Rufus had stooped over his prostrate critic.

"You insulted my mother," he declared, "and, but for soiling the water that the village folk have to drink I would fling you in the mill-race. Up with you and off our premises—for they are ours till the Christmas bells ring out. Then—should Miss Brereton support your infamous proceedings—you shall have Oakenarch Mill to tempt some poor fool into and rack-rent him as you have rack-rented us."

Mostyn dragged himself to his feet, muttering ominous prophecies. Rufus Hammond regarded him disdainfully.

"Be off," he concluded, "and—if you choose—prosecute me for assault, so that, at the price of a nominal fine, I may expose you in a court of justice."

The recipient of this advice slunk towards his horse, freed the rein from the gate-post, and, mounting with an oath, vanished at an angry gallop down the unfrequented road.

The miller propped his thick palms on either side of an ample waist, and shook a regretful head.

"That was my boy all over," he sighed; "but it's done no good, Rufus, it's done no good. Mostyn wasn't far wrong in recommending you to hold by the wood-carving—you're not fit for business, my son; you're what your mother wanted you to be—an artist. Artists have proud stomachs, and a tradesman must eat humble pie when there's anything to be gained by it."

"Nonsense, dad," retorted Rufus Hammond; "the scoundrel is determined to oust us—no humouring would have persuaded him to alter his mind. Besides, he insulted the little mother; I'd have punished him for that it he'd been a belted earl."

He glanced thoughtfully to and fro. A certain rich and quiet beauty lent the scene an irresistible charm. Before him the river, barred by a weir, spread a glossy sheet, reflecting the dull browns and reds of the autumnal foliage. Its current, confined to the mill-race, swept in a silent volume by the bank to operate the big wheel, dripping and moss-grown.

The scarlet roofs and the blackened walls of the mill and the mill-house nestled among the alders and willow

Read "Dead to the World."

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and the rumble of the rotating stones smote vaguely on the ear. Close to, the stream was spanned by an ancient bridge of oak, forming a single curve—the "oaken arch," that had served to christen the locality.

"But we'll not lose the mill without a fight for it, dad," promised Rufus, after an affectionate survey of the prospect; "there was more than a trifle of truth in what I said just now. It isn't Mostyn who is responsible to the law for our going or stopping; it's Miss Brereton up at the Abbey. She shall be asked her view, or my name's not Rufus Hammond."

Having so pledged himself, Rufus buttoned the cuffs of his woollen shirt, and stalked in the direction of the house. He was a comely fellow, frank, clear-skinned, and supple.

"It's not worth while seeking a snub, lad," moaned the miller; "people in her station don't interfere with their deputies over tenants of our class. And Mr. Mostyn's mother is Miss Brereton's aunt; they are cousins—gossip hints that they may strike up a match, Mr. Mostyn being the next heir until Miss Brereton marries. At all events, he manages the estate for her, and she won't fancy your knocking her representative about like a sack of flour."

"She is a woman," replied Rufus curtly. "I will explain that he insulted my mother."

With which intimation he strode into the picturesque dwelling that stood landward of the mill. Climbing a steep staircase, he gained a tiny bedchamber and unhooked a rough frieze jacket from the nail.

In the window was a bench littered with delicate steel tools and fine wood chippings. Rufus Hammond paused by it to don his coat. This done, he picked up a small block, exquisitely carved and curiously polished. It had the shape of a human form—plump, cheerful, with a bearded face and the slight stoop of age. Apart from the vigour of the portrait, its square cap and loose garments identified it as that of the old miller.

The wood-carver sorted out a scrap of cloth, dipped it in a jar of fluid, and rubbed the block carefully here and there.

"It isn't bad," he said at length, studying it with a smile. "I'll take it round to the Abbey, dad may get a chance to plead his cause in dumb show. Oddments of this kind are supposed, I believe, to amuse the rich and idle—we will try the experiment."

Wrapping the fragile article in a handful of tow—his solicitude for its safety an eloquent comment on his disrespectful reference to it—he drew his soft hat into a less negligent position on his dark curls, and descended to the kitchen. A buxom country girl was cooking at a cavernous grate.

"Lettice," remarked Rufus Hammond, "if I'm not back to dinner mind that father gets his."

"Yes, Mr. Rufus," assented the maid coquettishly, and casting a bashful glance at her young master;

A shadow fell athwart the threshold of the kitchen.

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"have you finished that likeness of me you was a-doing in the pearwood I soaked for you?"

"Dear! dear!" was the answer; "I'm afraid I haven't. But it shall be completed, though I mustn't neglect the mill for my hobbies, Lettice."

"No, sir," said Lettice; "but I be rare anxious to see it ended. Shall I brush your coat, sir?—it's main floury."

"Thanks," rejoined the wood-carver, and held the figure of the miller in security for Lettice to perform the suggested office. He was slipping it into his pocket again when the original entered.

"Where are you bound, my lad?" he queried. His son passed him to the door—the withered leaves of the advancing autumn had blown over the threshold and rustled beneath Rufus Hammond's tread.

"To the Abbey," announced the wood-carver, "to ask Miss Brereton a few questions."

He stepped on to the cobbles of the forecourt, walked across the paddock, and went up the road.

"Well!" exclaimed his father; "I'll be jiggered!"

CHAPTER II.

A Biter is Bitten.

"It is quite impossible for you to see Miss Brereton now. In any case, she takes no share in the management of the estate—that is all left to my son, Mr. Gerald Mostyn."

Rufus Hammond scrutinized the pale, selfish countenance of the elderly woman before him. He had been ushered into her presence by a supercilious footman, and stood near the luxurious lounge chair in which she sat. The room he had entered was large and old-fashioned, with mullioned windows, commanding a stretch of park and meadow, and the distant tiled roofs of Oakenarch.

"I am sorry to appear persistent, madam," declared the wood-carver; "but I interviewed Mr. Mostyn an hour ago, and it is for that reason I am here."

Mrs. Mostyn looked at him sharply.

"You seem," she remarked, "above your station, Mr.—Mr.—Hammond, I believe your name is. Doubtless you can write a very suitable letter, embodying the purport of this visit. My niece shall give it her earliest consideration."

The visitor's response was a polite gesture of dissent.

"I am afraid such an expedient would not meet the necessities of the case," he objected. "Miss Brereton is the person on whose account my father and I are about to be driven from our home; it is right that she should realize precisely what she is doing."

Mrs. Mostyn rose.

"I perceive, Mr. Hammond," she told him, haughtily, "that you are nothing more or less than a discontented tenant with a glib tongue. However, Miss Brereton cannot see you, and as I am myself occupied at present I shall be unable to spare you any further time. Permit me, therefore, to wish you good-morning."

She put out a thin arm in a black silk sleeve and touched the bell. The door from the hall opened instantly. Yet it was not a servant who stepped into the apartment, but a girl of some twenty summers. She wore a sweeping gown of grey cloth, with a collar of cobweb lace, and a big and feathered hat. Her hair was nut-brown, and had faint golden lights in it. Her eyes were blue, her lips smiling.

"Ah, there you are, auntie," she cried; "I'm just going to drive into the village—the Abbey is as dull as a tennis-court on a wet day. But perhaps I disturb you?"

"No, dear," said Mrs. Mostyn, "this—this gentleman was leaving." And she motioned to the liveried figure that had answered her peal.

Rufus Hammond did not offer to make his exit; instead, he turned to the newcomer.

"I have the pleasure of addressing Miss Brereton?" he asked.

The girl bowed, an expression of surprise crossing her face at the cultured tones and quiet ease of the speaker.

"Y—yes," she responded hesitatingly.

The young man's gaze dwelt on her with obvious admiration.

"I am Rufus Hammond," rejoined the wood-carver, "the son of Jasper Hammond, of Oakenarch Mill; we have been tenants to you and yours, Miss Brereton, five-and-twenty years."

Stephanie Brereton threw her gloves on to a cabinet.

"How interesting!" she exclaimed; "I often wish I knew the Oakenarch people better. But Gerald—my cousin, Mr. Mostyn, who does my business for me—says you would think me inquisitive. Would you, really?"

"Mr. Mostyn is in error, Miss Brereton," asserted Rufus, ignoring, with a stern directness, Mrs. Mostyn's demonstrations of irritability and the stolid patience of the servant; "we should rejoice to know you and for you to know us. Destiny has placed you where you are, and us where we are, but it would be a brave and womanly thing for you to bridge the gulf. As for Mr. Mostyn, pardon me if I confess that he is widening it."

The girl knitted her brows, and Mrs. Mostyn interrupted the wood-carver's grave sentences.

"My dear," she urged, "do not allow yourself to be fatigued. Hammond is merely a dissatisfied leaseholder, possessed by a grudge against Gerald."

"That is not true, madam," replied Rufus Hammond; "we were but concerned with Mr. Mostyn in his character of agent to Miss Brereton, and as such we have dealt honourably by him. But when my father and I are threatened with eviction from the mill that has been our home for a quarter of a century, that we have rebuilt after a disastrous fire, and upon which we have paid, since Mr. Brereton's death, an extortionate ground-rent, we feel it necessary to appeal from Mr. Mostyn to the real owner of Oakenarch manor. It is you, Miss Brereton, who are the mistress of our fate, and it is you who must deliver the verdict."

Stephanie had caught up her gloves and was fingering them abstractedly.

"Has Mr. Mostyn no explanation?" she inquired, colouring at the exercise of her authority.

"Yes," said Rufus, his dark orbs fixed on the fair, sensitive features of the querist; "he wants a higher ground-rent than we can pay, a higher one than the mill could earn—honestly—if it ran double shifts. But there are fools and rogues enough, so Mr. Mostyn has decided to oust us."

"Must I endure this?" gasped Mrs. Mostyn. "Stephanie, have you no consideration? The fellow ought to be removed immediately."

Her niece's mouth twitched, and she took stock of Rufus Hammond's athletic form.

"We haven't anybody who could do it, auntie," she observed; "but I should like to ask Mr. Hammond why his father is not here to state his own case?"

Rufus glanced down.

"He—he is a simple, modest soul, Miss Brereton," was the answer; "he would have been tongue-tied

with alarm. But I have brought him in miniature, if not in person. If I am a miller by trade, I am a wood-carver by taste. Miss Brereton, this is my father."

So sayin', the visitor groped in his pocket, disengaged the study of the miller from its tow envelope, drew it forth, and set it on the palm of his hand.

Stephanie regarded it at first with amusement, then with appreciation.

"Did—did you do that?" she demanded. "Why, it is wonderful! How did you get your training?"

"Tried to copy what I saw, Miss Brereton," said Rufus Hammond, "as far as the material could be coaxed to permit. Some carving in the parish church—by Grinling Gibbons, I have heard—put me on the right track, and afterwards I experimented."

"You—you must have genius," commented Stephanie: "how splendid! You—you will let me help you? I have powerful friends in London—Royal Academicians and newspaper men. Have you done other pieces?"

"A—a few," stammered Rufus, overwhelmed by the praise which the enthusiastic girl poured out to him.

"I will come and see them," said Stephanie Brereton, restoring him the carving of the miller; "that is, if I may? I am driving into the village; can't I give you a seat in my victoria?"

"Great heavens, Stephanie!" ejaculated Mrs. Mostyn, oblivious of Rufus in her excitement; "are you mad? His—his clothes!"

Her niece laughed.

"It's nothing worse than flour, auntie," she retorted. "Now, Mr. Hammond, the victoria is waiting. And don't worry about the mill. Mr. Mostyn desires to serve my interests of course; but I fancy I can convince him that they don't require your exile."

She signed to the footman, who flung open the door. Rufus stepped to Miss Brereton's side as she passed out: she noticed, with feminine astuteness, that he was not in the least embarrassed or disconcerted. They crossed the hall, preceding the severely-unconscious servant, and gained the sombre porch of the Abbey.

A smart victoria was, as Miss Brereton had stated, in readiness. Rufus handed her to her seat, followed himself, the footman transmitted the direction to the coachman, and they were whirled away. Mrs. Mostyn, gazing from a window, pinched her thin wrist to make sure she was not asleep.

"Pardon me an impertinent question, Mr. Hammond," said Stephanie Brereton, "but have you always lived here?"

"Always," assented Rufus, rolling the tow more securely about his carving.

"Your father is a—cultured man, then, for a miller?" hazarded Stephanie.

Her companion flushed.

"My father has a heart of gold," he faltered, "but—but it was my mother who educated me. She was what the world calls a lady, but she loved Jasper Hammond, and she married him."

Stephanie Brereton was silent, and the carriage dashed along to the chiming of harness and the rhythmic beat of hoofs. At last the victoria stopped—they had reached the gate of the paddock. Rufus alighted.

"We walk through the meadow," he said, and aided her to descend.

Side by side they strolled down to the mill-house—the sturdy, frieze-coated son of the soil, and the daintily-gowned daughter of the "classes."

Lettice stared when they appeared in the kitchen, but Stephanie grew enraptured over its huge grate, its antique, pewter-laden dresser, its cool flags and gleaming brasses. Rufus sent for his father, and, with an apology to their pretty guest, hurried up to his bedchamber for some further specimens of his work. His pulses throbbed and his brain reeled—a thousand impossible hopes had suddenly taken shape and form.

The wood-carver returned to find that his father had arrived upon the scene, and now stood twisting his cap and pumping out monosyllabic answers to Stephanie's friendly compliments on his son's skill.

She hailed the younger man's advent with relief, and began to discuss the carvings. All were animated subjects, a wrestling match between country youths, a bull attacked by a dog, a village fiddler tuning his instrument. Stephanie knew enough to gauge the rare vigour and dexterity of this obscure artist.

The unfinished study of Lettice attracted her attention, she picked it up and looked from it to the original. "You will make something of this, Mr. Hammond," she told him curtly.

Rufus winced. "I have not touched it for a month," he responded. "I had begun to idealize it too much. Lettice wants a likeness of herself, not a fancy portrait."

The words were casual, yet they meant more than reached the ear. Stephanie smiled again. She had been vaguely conscious of a feeling that the splendid craftsman, with the world at his feet, might do better than ally himself to a plump, good-tempered country lass, whose ignorant adoration would have to console him for her lack of brains.

While she sat over the carvings, her arms on the scrubbed table-top, and her graceful head poised to criticise, a shadow fell athwart the threshold of the kitchen, and Stephanie looked up, astonished, to encounter the equally astonished gaze of Gerald Mostyn. By him was a constable, with a blue paper, folded.

"I've a summons for you, Mr. Rufus," said the latter, assuming an official demeanour, yet speaking as one who meets an intimate acquaintance; "it's a summons for assault, *and* battery, against the person of Mr. Gerald Mostyn, on your premises, this morning."

And the blue paper was thrust into the wood-carver's fingers.

Stephanie started up.

"Gerald!" she cried, "what freak can you be contemplating. Mr. Hammond, surely my cousin has exaggerated your conduct?"

Rufus stiffened himself, and his dark pupils were raised to hers.

"He—he sneered at my—mother," she was answered, "and I knocked him down."

"Assault *and* battery," said the constable; "but you needn't have admitted it, Mr. Rufus, in my hearing."

Stephanie Brereton sprang to Gerald Mostyn's side, a disdainful fire in her blue orbs.

"We will discuss the whole affair at once, Gerald," she remarked coldly, "and in private. Mr. Hammond, if this summons is pursued, and you are fined I will pay the fine publicly in court to show Oakenarch what I think of my cousin."

She moved towards the threshold of the kitchen, and Gerald Mostyn went with her, whispering unavailingly. Stephanie turned, oblivious of his murmured protests.

"Mr. Hammond," she continued, addressing herself to Rufus, "I will call another day and enjoy your wonder-

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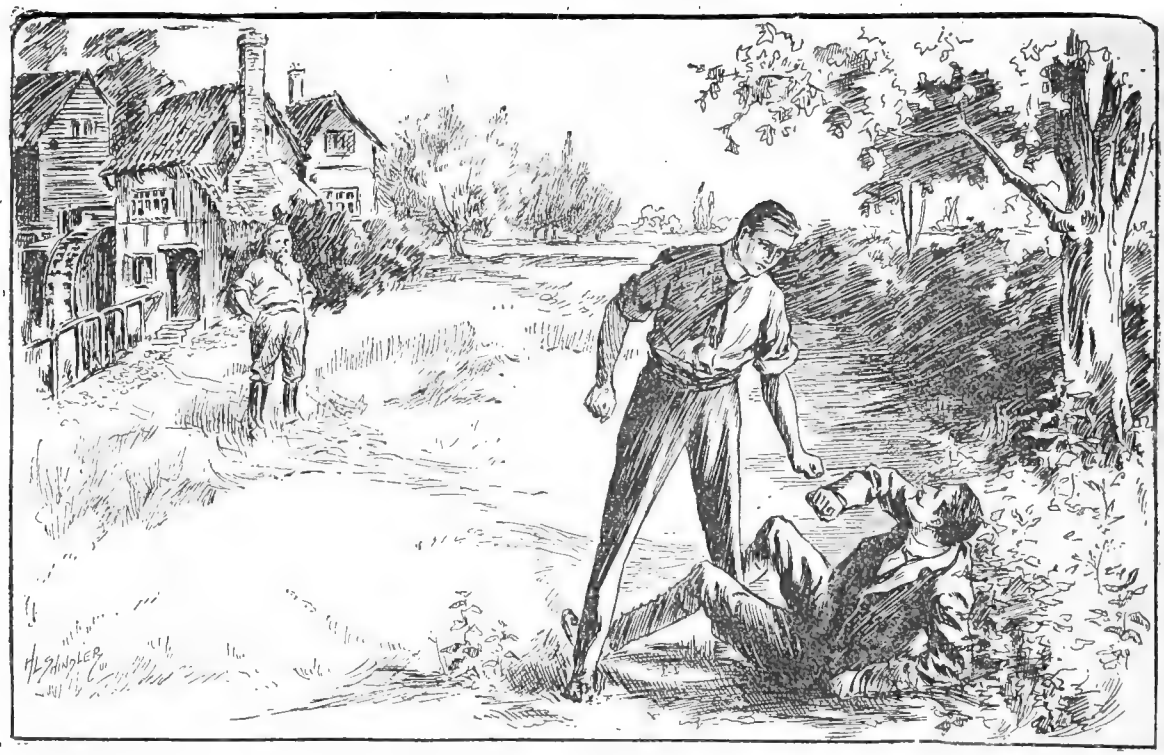

A spring, and Rufus stood over his prostrate critic.

ful work, and—and get your father to take me round the mill, which he will *not* leave. For the present, good-bye."

And she swept out into the autumn sunshine with the air of an empress. Gerald Mostyn glanced back at the wood-carver, to snarl an unintelligible sentence of hate.

CHAPTER III.

A Modern Duel.

"I've got it lad, and you were right, after all; I thought you a bit of a fool at the time, but you've saved the mill for me, that you have!"

Jasper Hammond spread out the stiff sheet of parchment, engrossed with the formal phrases of the law-writer—it was a ninety-nine year lease of the land occupied by Oakenarch Mill.

"Called on lawyer in town to-day," said the miller, "and he had it ready for me. No costs, either; Miss Brereton had done the thing free and generous. Though I'll be bound," he added, "it's more for your sake than mine, Rufus."

His son looked up from the bench over which he leant, plying a thin steel blade about a bust of boxwood. It was the head and shoulders of a woman, arch and yet sedate, with waved locks on the low temples and dainty neck. The eyes—by some trick of the carver's art—seemed to smile, and the delicate lips to tremble in sympathy.

"Nonsense!" cried Rufus Hammond; "she acted from a rare and chivalrous instinct of justice. Mostyn plundered you for years in her name—this is her way of repaying you."

"And that," remarked his father, contemplating the boxwood bust, "is your fashion of thanking her. You've a master hand, my boy, and she'll be main pleased, no doubt. Is she to give you some more—what you call them—sittings for it?"

"One," said Rufus, abstractedly, working at a mimic tress of hair, so light it might almost have been stirred by a summer breeze; "this afternoon."

The miller folded and pocketed his precious parchment.

"I heard a bit of good news from lawyer," went on Jasper Hammond. "Mr. Mostyn is not to be Miss Brereton's agent any longer. Folks were saying at the 'Green Dragon' ordinary, there'd been a quarrel between him and her, and she's to manage her business herself in future. Time enough, too, for Mostyn was getting the name of Brereton as much hated as his own. But she's changing that, and fast—others than us, my lad, have had a lift from her in the last month. Oakenarch is wild in praise of her."

Rufus selected a fresh tool, and sliced at the close, even fibres of the boxwood.

"Mrs. Mostyn's leaving the Abbey also," pursued his father; "she's lost her chance of being Miss Brereton's mother-in-law as well as her aunt. Another relative is going to live with Miss B—a different sort to Mrs. Mostyn, the gossips have it."

A clock in the lobby below chimed the half-hour after two o'clock. Rufus Hammond began to collect his implements.

"I must take these down," he said, "Miss Brereton will be here soon."

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The miller held the door for him. The wood-carver carried off his unfinished subject and a sheaf of shining blades in worn hafts, descended the dusty staircase, and deposited them in the immaculate kitchen.

Lettice was baking bread in the great oven. She glanced at the bust and sighed—a certain daring hope in the little servant's heart had recently received a mortal wound. Rufus had not laboured over her counterfeit presentment as he was labouring over that of Miss Stephanie Brereton.

A footfall sounded in the cobble-stoned courtyard without, and Lettice turned to see, at the entrance of the shadowy apartment, the sullen visage of Gerald Mostyn.

Passing her his gaze travelled to the wood-carver.

"Hallo, Hammond!" he exclaimed, "so you're there—I—I want a word with you."

Rufus laid the last of his chisels in order and crossed to the threshold by which the visitor stood. Mostyn retreated to the short turf of the mill-paddock, motioning mysteriously to the wood-carver.

Puzzled, Rufus followed him. A sudden spring brought Gerald Mostyn between the house and his companion; he flung off his felt hat and unbuttoned his tweed coat—he had come in walking costume.

"Now, my cockerel!" he said, "you and I have a game to play out. A month ago you struck me unawares and I chose to stomach the blow, rather than scuffle with a country dauber. But as I am parting from Oakenarch—an inconvenient development for which you are responsible—I have determined to settle up the two accounts in one. If I am no novice with the gloves, you are a stone heavier and in better training, so we fight fair. Off with your jacket and choose your ground."

The wood-carver remained passive.

"I will not fight you, Mr. Mostyn," he answered; "I am the bigger man and you will get hurt."

Gerald Mostyn sneered.

"Have your drubbing any way you like," was his response, and, freed from his coat, poised himself dexterously and sprang in. Rufus Hammond's head moved—he had avoided a couple of scientific blows, yet his arms hung loosely at his sides. Mostyn's jaw set—the challenged was not lacking in experience. But cowardice was not among Gerald Mostyn's faults, and he rushed in again.

This time a clenched fist attained its destination—a trickle of blood showed on the wood-carver's nether lip. He leapt back, with the agility of a stag, and commenced to slip off his frieze jacket. He had no vest beneath and his waist was belted, his linen shirt fluttered white in the autumn air like that of a duellist.

"You will have it," he said quietly, and, stepping forward with light but firmly-planted strides. Mostyn scrutinized him an instant, and, darted in and sent a double-hammer stroke to the wood-carver's chest and waist. He was away in a second—unscathed.

Rufus Hammond smiled and drew a deep breath.

"Tickle his frontispiece, my lad," called a steady voice—the voice of Jasper Hammond. He had lounged into the courtyard and watched the struggle, one palm on his hip, the other restraining the horrified though fascinated Lettice, his grey pupils contemplating the opponents.

Rufus nodded and in the same moment stopped a hot left-hander. Mostyn pursued the attack, and a vicious half-arm jab sought the wood-carver's ribs, Rufus permitted it to land unnoticed as he recoiled, to deliver his own blows, in quick succession, upon Gerald Mostyn's cheek and jaw. The recipient pitched heavily upon the grass.

Rattled into madness by the shock, Mostyn gathered himself up and dashed at his antagonist just as a piercing cry of "Gerald! Mr. Hammond!" reached the ears of the combatants and announced the presence of Stephanie Brereton, who, escorted by a groom, had ridden unperceived into the paddock. She threw herself from her horse, left the rein dangling, and hurried to the antagonists.

Mostyn—more a bloodthirsty animal than a human being—was fighting a ferocious rally, and Rufus shrank from the madman in a kind of pity, contenting himself with an impassable defence. Inch by inch he yielded ground rather than knock out his opponent under the very gaze of a woman and a relative.

A cry startled him.

"Rufus! Rufus!" warned Jasper Hammond; "the race—mind the race!"

Rufus swerved, he had neared unconsciously the actual verge of the rushing, glassy flood. The action deprived Gerald Mostyn's leaning figure of his previous support, the strong hands and arms of his enemy. His own hail of blows overbalanced him, he tottered, missed his footing, and staggered into the stream, to be borne, with frightful rapidity, towards the wheel.

The wood-carver filled his panting lungs, dashed a red stream from his brows, and dived into the mill-race. The miller, flying to the bank, saw him glide under the surface, his body straight, his legs closed, his palms together. Driven by the impetus of his lungs, he was already beyond the drifting, floundering figure of Gerald Mostyn, who swam, but swam badly.

A second later and his brown locks emerged as Mostyn lurched by in the grip of the current. The wood-carver clutched his quondam enemy, seized a vest-collar in his teeth, and struck out, fiercely, Titanically, for the edge of the race. His fingers snatched the bank and he stayed, the water sucking at him greedily, and the drops from the revolving wheel beating on his head.

A warm clasp fastened on his wrist and hauled him up—it was that of the miller, who, shaking in every limb, but resolute and speedy, had consummated the rescue. Hanging protectingly to Jasper Hammond's loose clothing were Miss Stephanie Brereton's groom and his mistress. As the wood-carver lifted the senseless frame of Mostyn from the defeated current he had a glimpse of Stephanie's eyes; the undisguised admiration in them made his pulse dance.

* * * * * *

"Hammond, I've behaved to you like a cur," said Gerald Mostyn that evening to Rufus, "but you—you can imagine why. I—I love Stephanie, and I was jealous. Folks were coupling her name and yours because of her visits to the mill. And before that I—I didn't understand you or I'd have treated you better over the lease."

He paused, apparently communing with himself.

"To—to be honest, Hammond," he added, "you've saved my life, and—and I—I know she cares for you. You're an artist and therefore a gentleman—ask her to marry you; she'll say 'Yes.'"

And Stephanie Brereton did—to the lasting delight and profit of Oakenarch. The bust of Miss Brereton was finished by her betrothed husband and exhibited in the Academy of the ensuing spring. It was marked "not for sale." Gerald Mostyn went to Argentina in June, and in the following month Stephanie Brereton became Mrs. Rufus Hammond.

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a *P. W.* penknife to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, November 4th. Postcards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. A. Hutton, of 3 Lapage Street, Bradford, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

ADELE: "What do you think is woman's real mission?" Edna: "To get her name changed."

THE following notice appeared recently in a shop window of a tailor in Cork: "Wanted, two apprentices, who will be treated as one of the family."

YANKEE, standing on the stern of a steamer as she leaves Liverpool, and holding a shilling aloft: "If there's a man, woman, or child on this blessed island I've not tipped, come forward now, for this is your last and only chance!"

TOURIST: "These are beautiful mountains, but how much more picturesque would they look if there was an ancient ruin on the summit." Hotel-keeper: "Yes, I believe an ancient ruin would draw more tourists. Next year I am going to have one built."

YOUNG LADY: "I am tired of living on my relatives and want to be independent." Employment Agent: "I might get you a place in a shop." "That won't do. I should be under someone's orders continually. I want to be independent of everything and everybody." "Ah, I see. I'll get you a place as a cook."

PASSENGER (angrily): "Why didn't you stop the car for me?" Conductor: "How was I to know you wanted to get on?" Passenger: "Didn't you see me swinging my arms and jumping up and down and waving my umbrella?" Conductor: "Of course. Could anyone help seeing you? The whole street was looking at you." Passenger: "Then why didn't you stop?" Conductor: "I thought you were dancing to that organ."

* A CERTAIN gentleman who served with the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, is rather fond of drawing the long-bow when referring to his personal experiences. This fact has not escaped the notice of the gentleman's faithful man-servant, whom we will call Donald. The other afternoon the returned warrior had been relating to Donald a particularly startling story of heroism and deadly peril, when the canny Scot gravely observed: "It's a peety ye didna tak' me wi' ye." "Oh!" went on the narrator, "I daresay you would have done your best, but, really, you couldn't have assisted me much. I was completely hemmed in, and there was nothing for it but to cut my way through the serried mass of furious burghers. If you had been there, Donald, I'm afraid you would only have been in the way." "Aweel," said Donald doggedly, "mebbe ye're richt; but for a' that, I would ha' been useful as a witness when ye telt that story tae your friends."

BLANK books possess no literary merit, but they are bound to sell.

BRIDGET: "Me mistress has been presented at court, Mrs. M'Flab." Mrs. M'Flab: "Ye don't say so! Phwat was the charge?"

GENTLEMAN: "That looks a well-bred dog." Owner: "I should think he was well-bred. Why, he won't have a bit of dinner till he's got his collar on!"

"PHYSICAL culture is so helpful; it teaches the children to go upstairs properly." "How about coming downstairs." "Oh, they generally slide down the balusters!"

BOBBY: "Dad, what is a mutual friend?" Mr. Fogg: "He is generally one who makes it his business to see that you don't miss hearing the nasty things your friends say about you."

HUSBAND: "I have made all sorts of sacrifices for you. Now, what did you ever give up for me?" Wife: "What did I ever give up for you? Well, you astonish me! Why, I gave up half-a-dozen of the nicest young men in town."

INFALLIBLE: "Is your partner a man of good judgment?" asked an old friend who is in town on a visit. "You will find in him," was the unctuous answer, "a man of infallible judgment. He never makes a move without taking my advice."

A POOR woman who kept a small shop in a northern village, and who was troubled with a husband who could scarcely be considered a credit to the family, one day found herself a widow through the sudden demise of her spouse. A lady, who often made small purchases at the shop, called to offer her sympathy. "I am sure, Mrs. G——, you must miss your husband very much," said the lady. "Well, mum," was the widow's reply, "it do seem queer to go into the shop and find something in the till!"

TEACHER: "If your mother had twenty-five yards of stuff and made a dress containing eighteen yards, how much would she have left?" Little Girl: "Mamma can't make her own dresses. She has tried often, and they are always either too——" Teacher: "Suppose she sent it to a dressmaker, how much would the dressmaker send back?" Little Girl: "Depends on which dressmaker she sent it to. Some wouldn't send back any." Teacher (impatiently): "Suppose she sent it to an honest one?" Little Girl: "Some of the honest ones cut things to waste, so that there is never anything left, no matter how much you send 'em."

THE curious manner in which various members of the same Boer families have ranged themselves on opposite sides in the present war recalls a story attributed to Frederick Locker. In one of our frontier wars with the Afridis we were considerably assisted by several members of the hostile tribe. An officer on duty chanced one day to point out to a native sentry a certain black fellow whom he had observed skulking with others round the fort, evidently with sinister intentions. "I see him, sar," said the sentry; "had two shots at him a'ready, him hard to hit, he hardest man to hit I know." "Oh, you know him, do you?" said the officer. "Oh, yes, sar; I know de rascal. I been trying to shoot him all de week." "Why, who is he?" "Oh, de rascal—he's my father!"

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THE WOMAN IN RED.

WINTER reigned throughout Europe, but on the Riviera spring and summer bloomed together. Overhead the sky was infinitely blue, below the sea was green and purple and amethyst. Everywhere the sun, everywhere the scent of geranium and mimosa, the fragrance of rose and violet. Always the deep boom, boom of the waves thundering against the tall cliffs of Monaco, always the cry of the sea gull, forever the chimes of the church of Sainte Devote.

At Monte Carlo, that paradise of the gamester, the season was at its height. The Hotels de Paris and Beau-Rivage were crowded, those of the quarter La Condamine were full, and well-dressed people, finding shelter in some cheap lodging-house over in Monaco, gave the name of some more fashionable resort when applying for a *carte d'admission* to the "Cercle des Etrangeres," the euphemistic title of that institution which draws hither the avid and the inquisitive of all the nations. Day after day, night after night, the Casino overflowed with those who came to tempt Fortune. Everyone laughed and sang and was gay. Heavy hearts are hidden at Monte Carlo.

It was at a concert that she first appeared—the Woman in Red. The French tenor was just beginning his number when the doors of the middle box of the right-hand tier swung slowly open and closed behind her. She stood for just a moment outlined against the ivory background. Very tall she seemed, dressed from head to foot in red—not cardinal, nor crimson—but the most intense and glowing scarlet. From out this mass of colour her bare throat rose vividly white, and down the satin of her skirt her ungloved arms hung, soft and round as those of a child. Her hair, too, fine and fair, gave her head a rather childish look. And then—no wonder fans stopped fluttering and silks began to rustle—her face was entirely concealed by a mask of dark red velvet!

The lady seated herself quickly, with a curious grace in every movement, and the red of her dress spreading out around her stained as with blood the whiteness of the box. She raised her glass and insolently swept the house, moving her head so that the jewels in her hair blazed and flamed into the faces turned in her direction. A laugh floated from above as a woman in the gallery, with her programme twisted into a little roll, mocked the motion. The Woman in Red turned away her face with a shrug of her white shoulders, and sat through the performance quite still and indifferent. At the beginning of the last number she rose slowly, and gathering together her shimmering scarlet left the box. That was the introduction to the world of Monte Carlo of the Woman in Red.

After that interest centred about her, increasing as her peculiarities became known. She never wore a suggestion of any colour but red, and that alone was enough to make her conspicuous. Then the mask, thought to have been merely a caprice on the night of the concert, was never removed. That rendered her mysterious. She talked but little, going about silently, with soft, light step. One might be quite alone, and the next moment suddenly aware of the Red Woman's presence. When the tall young Englishman who lost everything at a turn of the wheel went out into the Casino garden and, cocking his pistol in the shadow of the cacti, muttered, "I'll end the whole cursed business!" the Woman in Red murmured persuasively beside him, "Oh, I wouldn't—" and he didn't, and when a lady knelt one evening before the image of the Virgin in the church of Sainte Devote, and whispered wildly, "Oh, blessed mother, forgive me my sins!" it was the Woman in Red, who finished softly for her, "and those who sin against me." This made her something more than conspicuous and mysterious—it made her awesome.

No one ever saw her smoke, but her scarlet garments always exhaled a faint odour of cigarettes. Every night she came into the roulette room and sat there in her scarlet dress, with a red flower in her hair, and put down her stakes with as much emotion as though the gold and notes were worthless. Consistent in her colour scheme, she invariably placed her money on the red, and nine times out of ten she won.

To make her a trifle more conspicuous, mysterious and eerie she had for her chaperon a woman so thin and wrinkled and old as to seem hardly capable of life. When some one ventured to ask her a question about the

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Woman in Red the creature cackled, "Oh, the Devil, the Devil, the Devil. How should I know?"

"No wonder the men like her," chattered a lively little French woman. "They'd like us if we'd muffle our faces and wore clothes like that. I'll wager she has the face of a blanchisseuse—any one could be fascinating behind a velvet mask."

"She is, certainly," said a bystander, dryly.

"Peste!" exclaimed the sallow critic, angrily. "No one wants that old Count or that stupid Baron, or that pink-cheeked English boy, anyway."

It is true that the Woman in Red found ardent admirers in the old Count and the stupid Baron and the English boy—the one to whom she had whispered that night behind the cacti—and the rivalry between them increased as the season passed. To-day one was in favour, to-morrow another, and the frequenters of the Casino got to betting on the chances of the several suitors till it became almost as exciting as a game at one of the tables.

But throughout it all the woman remained calm, inscrutable, mysterious. Neither of the three could persuade her to tell her name or take off her mask.

"I answer to any name," she said, "I have forgotten my own, and as for my face, what makes you think it beautiful?"

"Oh, you," said the courtly old Count.

"Your hands," said the stupid Baron.

"Your hair," said the blonde young Englishman, with British egotism.

In answer to each she only laughed a hard little laugh, not altogether pleasant to hear.

To be much talked about and to say little appeared to suit her. A month after her advent no one in Monte Carlo or Monaco knew a whit more about her than at first, and no one would have hesitated to give half his fortune—had he one—to know everything. The mystery of the masked woman was exasperating—the theories concerning her innumerable. Perhaps the majority of the women believed that, being very ugly, she had adopted this means of attracting the attention rightfully belonging to beauty. She was a problem which might be studied for weeks without arriving at a solution.

The warm southern days crept lazily along, and, as sometimes happens even in that sheltered paradise, began to grow oppressively hot. It was on the languid evening of one of these scorching days that the Woman in Red and the young Englishman were gaming side by side at the roulette table. The air of the Casino was heavy and scented, there was a murmur of laughter and talk, and the frequent click-clack of the roulette balls The woman pushed back her chair impatiently and said to the man:

"Do come out into the garden—it is insufferably hot in here!"

"I should think," said the young man at length, as they strolled through the shrubbery, "that your mask would be unbearable."

"It is."

"Then why not take it off?"

"I did not come out to talk of that."

"But perhaps I did."

The Britisher's shoulders squared themselves aggressively.

The woman made no reply, but continued her occupation of listlessly slipping a ring up and down her finger.

"Oh, I have dropped it," she suddenly cried, and stooped quickly to search for it. The low branches of a tree caught in the coils of her yellow hair. To free it she impatiently drew up her head. There was a sharp click, as of the release of a metal catch, and the velvet mask, loosened, fell softly to the ground. She made an inarticulate noise in her throat, and her hands were thrown upward in an ineffectual attempt to conceal her face, but the young man was too quick for her. There in the bright white moonlight, he looked full at the face of the Woman in Red and, with a terrible cry of horror, fell like one dead upon the grass.

It was a long time before he opened his eyes and felt the touch of the woman's hand upon his brow and the cool trickle of water over his face. He lay passive, thinking of nothing. Then suddenly it all came back.

"Oh, don't, don't touch me!" he gasped. "Keep away from me."

He staggered to his feet, and pressed his hands to his eyes to shut out the vision that would return. His knees trembled and his teeth chattered. Something as white as the moonlight gathered at his lips.

The woman made an imploring gesture.

"Oh, see, I have put it on again," and she turned her head that he might behold the velvet mask.

At the sound of her voice he shivered in terror and, without a word, but making a strange moaning noise, he ran, like one demented, in the direction of the lighted Casino. And in the still, white moonlight the Woman in Red stood like one of the statues of the terraced garden, its marble purity turned to scarlet.

The next night she was in her usual place at the roulette table, but it was the stupid Baron who sat beside her.

"Why don't you play?" he asked, as she sat motionless and indifferent, eyed curiously by the spectators of the game. She sat up wearily and pushed a pile of gold and notes upon the red, No. 12. The croupier started the wheel revolving rapidly in one direction and sent the ball deftly rolling in the other, and there was a little buzz of conversation. Tongues wagged briskly while eyes were fastened on the whirling wheel.

"What has become of our English friend?" asked one.

"Gone home," was the answer from another across the table. "Perhaps the heat went to his head." He tapped his forehead significantly.

Gradually the wheel slowed down, and the ball was about to settle with its customary click. Gamblers leant over the table to see the result of their bets. The slowly rolling sphere was just dropping into No. 12! No, it has settled into the adjoining compartment.

"*Vingt-huit, noir gagne!*" calls out the croupier with shrill monotony, and the shining heaps are distributed to the winners.

"And Madame has lost!" exclaimed the stupid Baron in surprise.

The Woman in Red made no reply, but stood up and, with an imperious motion not to follow, walked steadily from the salle de jeu, a vivid bit of colour under the glittering lights of the splendid apartments.

Early the next morning she was found lying on the marble steps of the Casino dead in her scarlet dress. The stain trailing along the snowy marble had been scarlet, too, but was now turning to a reddish-brown. In one fine, strong hand was tightly clutched a folded note. The servants and people who gathered in trembling awe sent for the priest of the church of Sainte Devote to read

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it. He came quickly, panting a little for breath. Taking the paper from the fingers of the dead woman he glanced over it nervously, while the people looked on in breathless silence. It was written in French.

"I will read it," the priest said slowly, and he translated the writing in trembling tones—

"I have taken my own life—let that pass. Let no one lift the mask from my face but the priest of the church of Sainte Devote, and I pray him, when he knows my secret, to say mass for my soul. By all that is holy, respect these words."

As his solemn voice ceased those crowding about shuddered and fell back in nameless fear. They at once carried the body of the woman to where she had lodged, the early morning sun gleaming strangely on her scarlet garments and yellow hair. The priest entered the house and closed the door upon the crowd.

When he again emerged he was hardly recognisable. His face, deadly white, twitched and quivered spasmodically, his eyes protruded and rolled wildly from side to side, and his lips were parted in an awful, unholy smile. His trembling hands could scarcely hold the crucifix. To those who spoke to him he made no answer—he did not seem to hear.

They buried the woman that evening at sunset, among the nameless graves on the hill behind Monte Carlo, as speedily as possible. When the grim, grotesque companion of the dead was asked if anyone should be sent for, the only answer she would give was—

"Oh, the devil, the devil, the devil. How should I know?"

The priest from the church of Sainte Devote mumbled the service rapidly and indistinctly over the grave, with one shaking hand raised in a defensive attitude, as though to banish something or still the quaking terror that shook him from head to foot. When the ritual was ended he turned to the dense crowd which no secrecy or word of authority had been able to keep away, and said so sternly and distinctly that his voice echoed in the silence:

"Whosoever as much as dares to touch this grave, upon him I pronounce the everlasting curse of the Holy Church of Rome!"

Down the sloping hillside back to the town he led the procession, all the way shaking like a leaf. When they came again to the narrow streets he suddenly stopped trembling and began to laugh, and at the sound of such laughter the people stumbled over each other in their anxiety to get away.

The commissaire special and the administration acted promptly and with energy. There was an extra concert that very night, a grand ball on that succeeding, followed by a comic opera. At Monte Carlo it will not do to encourage reminiscence. And so, by-and-by, people stopped thinking, and began to talk of other things. The old Count and stupid Baron were among the first to drop the subject. But when to the mad priest in his cell there came continually the deep boom, boom of the sea, the cry of the gull and the chimes of the church where he should say no more mass, he laughed, and laughed, and laughed—though he could not remember why!

OVER THE WIRES.

I AM one of the few women in the world who has an opportunity to know exactly what is thought of her, for I am the "telephone girl," "the Central," "that stupid operator," and I answer to numerous other tender appellations which come to my ears over the wires, when business is brisk and my patrons in a hurry. It is a hard life, often an unpleasant one, but it has compensations; for instance, if one considers a kindly interest in the affairs of one's townspeople legitimate, it must be admitted that I have exceptional advantages in that line.

Just the other day I concerned myself in an odd little affair, which turned out so well that I am tempted to confess my part in it. That nice chap, Alec Andrews, rang up some weeks ago and asked me to give him Miss Frances Cary's line, which I did with haste and no little interest since the flirtation has been town talk for some weeks. No sooner did I hear Miss Cary's cool "Well, Mr. Andrews," than I knew love must be running its proverbial rough course, and I could almost see him stiffen up at his end, as he said abruptly: "Oh! I beg your pardon for disturbing you, Miss Cary, I merely wanted to make amends for anything I may have said last night that needed an apology. I was vexed, and I may have been hasty——"

His voice dwindled into a sort of expectant silence. But that stupid girl, instead of meeting him half way, wrapped her mantle of injured dignity about her, and gave him to understand that the less said about their differences of opinion, the better. I hardly needed the signal to disconnect their lines, after the last chilly words, but I drew a sigh of regret that there were to be no more daily conferences between them over walks and drives and good times generally.

"You have sent a nice fellow about his business, Miss Frances Cary," I said to myself, vindictively, "and you may be sorry by the time you have forgotten what the foolish quarrel was about."

But while I like Mr. Andrews for his courtesy to me, in my small connection with him, and was really sorry

Read "Dead to the World."

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for his bad fortune in the direction of his ladylove, I am much too busy for prolonged meditation over the affairs of the town, and I hardly gave him a thought for the next few weeks. Occasionally I caught echoes, in the talk of Miss Cary's girl friends, of the unhealed breach between Mr. Andrews and herself, but it was quite a month later that I recognised his voice one morning asking for 930, the town florist.

Mr. Mays didn't come to the 'phone himself, but sent rather a raw hand, judging from the extreme uncertainty of his replies. Finally, however, Mr. Andrews succeeded in ordering a dozen American beauties to be sent before the dance the following night to "Miss Um-m-mn."

"What was the name, sir?" asked the clerk.

"Miss Leary," answered Mr. Andrews impatiently, "Miss Frances Leary."

There was a moment's silence, then, adding, "Put in my card, which I'll send down," Mr. Andrews rang off before he heard the perplexed murmur from the timid salesman at the other end.

"Miss Frances—what? Why can't they stop long enough to make a fellow understand? I didn't hear—oh! yes! Miss Frances Cary—that's his particular admiration."

I smiled grimly to myself, but it wasn't my business to run Mr. Mays' shop, and no doubt Mr. Andrews would straighten it out later. I confess I did feel some slight twinges of conscience about not correcting such an obvious mistake when Fanny Leary rang later in the day and asked her married sister, Mrs. Johnson: "Ella," she said, "I want your long white wrap for the dance to-night; I am going with Alec Andrews, and he always sends me flowers, and is so nice that I want to look particularly well."

"Certainly, my dear," came back in placid tones from b'and Mrs. Johnson, whose evenings are spent before the fire with Will and the children, and who hardly needs opera cloaks any longer. "Send Mary for it. So you are going with Alec? That's nice. Sends flowers, does he? What are they this time? I hope n t red; with your pink gown. Is he still at odds with Fan Cary? I heard her cousin Anne say the other day she thought they were both tired of the row, and if Alec would only make some advance, Fan would respond. Young people are so haughty these days. They never are willing to take the first step. Yes, Will, I m coming now! Good-bye, child, have a good time."

As I belong to the great army of work-women, my pat'is don't lead me to dances and festivities, so my knowledge of the events of that evening I gleaned from broken sentences over the 'phone, next day.

Fanny Leary rang her sister up again by breakfast time, and I fancy she sounded a trifle hurried and constrained: "Thank you ever so much for the clock, Ella. Yes, I had a very nice time. What? Oh! Flowers? No! my dear. It was the oddest thing, none ever came. Alec came late himself, and bundled me into the carriage without ceremony. The dance had begun when we got there, so there was no chance to look around, even. What? No, he didn't say anything one way or the other. Most of the girls had flowers, but not all. Yes, a little queer, as he always did it before. Thank you again, good-bye."

Now for explanations, I thought, and, sure enough, presently Mr. Andrews called up the florist and asked in no gentle tone if he had sent the roses to Miss Leary, as ordered.

Old Mr. Mays himself was answering, but he became rather bewildered, had to send for the assi tant, and finally it all came out—the flowers had gone to Miss Cary, as I had known all along.

Mr. Andrews indulged in a pretty expressive exclamation of displeasure, and advised Mr. Mays to change clerks, but the mischief was done.

By-and-bye Frances Cary's mother called for Mrs. Johns n, to ask for some recipe, and I held my breath to hear what followed the business talk.

"Frances isn't going out, I believe, Mrs. Cary. So she wasn't at the dance last night?"

"No; she stayed at home; but she had rather a pretty surprise in a big bunch of lovely roses which came in the afternoon."

"Oh, indeed!" A pause, while I fancied Mrs. Johnson gathering herself up for a question. "I suppose it would be indiscreet to ask who sent them?" she laughed.

"Yes, rather," answered Mrs. Cary. "A very unexpected source; but I won't tell on her. Two spoons of butter and one of oil, did you say?"

Of course it wasn't long before Mrs. Johnson wanted to speak to her sister Fanny, and in the interval she had quite settled in her mind that the r ses had gone astray. In fact, she hit the truth almost exactly.

Now, Fanny Leary is a nice girl, but I suppose it isn't in girl nature to sit still and see another girl come in for one's own favours. I re olved to do a very unwarrantable thing. When Mrs. Johnson finished her story, and was hanging up her receiver, I spoke to Miss Leary myself.

"I beg your pardon," I said—and I confess I felt rather shaky—"but, Miss Leary, I unavoidably heard your sister and yourself, just now, and I feel as if I must put in a word, though it's none of my business." She started to answer, but I did not give her time. "I heard Mr. Andrews order those roses, and they were for you; but Mr. Mays' man misunderstood, and they have gone to Miss Cary by mistake. But, Miss Leary, don't you think it may smooth matters over between those two—and—I know I am impertinent, but I am so anxious for Miss Cary not to know!"

I gasped a little at my own boldness, but Fanny Leary laughed good-naturedly, and said: "Oh! very well, Miss Duncan, she shan't learn it from me!"

As I am neither messenger boy nor letter carrier, I can't say what Frances Cary wrote in her note of acknowledgment to Andrews. My part of the story ends with a telephone call, two days later, and it seemed to me that ring had a peculiar vibration, but that may be too fanciful a notion for a sedate public official, like myself.

"Give me Miss Cary, please. Oh! Good morning, Miss Frances. Thank you so much for your note—ah! —what did you say? Not at all; not at all; it was worth a whole garden of roses! And may I come to see you this evening, and apologize for past sins, and be taken back into——"

But here she interrupted him gaily. "Of course you may. This—this—oh! well, this would never have happened if that telephone girl hadn't cut us off so quick one day several weeks ago, when I was about to explain that perhaps I was too quick in saying what I did. Yes; these 'Centrals' are unfeeling creatures. Good-bye, then until to-night!"

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DEAD TO THE WORLD

By Henry T. Johnson.

Author of "Cruce Vincit," "The Pride of the Ring," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST CHAPTERS.

Richard Seldon, a convict, escapes. In a train he meets Cyril Roylance just back from Australia, whom he murders and impersonates. He assumes the rôle of squire, and pays attention to Doris Dale. One day he encounters two old criminal acquaintances and agrees to meet them.

While on a visit to Squire Dale's, the latter's old butler talks of Cyril Roylance's younger days to the annoyance and discomfiture of Richard Seldon.

CHAPTER IX. *(continued.)*

The blood rushed to the manservant's face, he being man as well as servant.

"I beg pardon, sir," he said quietly. "You see I forgot myself; only I thought you might have remembered Rex——"

"Of course, my good fellow," said the other. "Rex the terrier, let's see, Skye terrier, or fox terrier?"

Barker paused a moment, then inquired, "Wasn't he a black and tan, sir?"

"Of course—of course; used to kill rats. And now, my good fellow, run away, you're making my head ache with your chatter."

"Very well, sir, I wish you good-night, sir."

"Oh, go to the devil!"

"Shall I give him any message, sir?"

"You insolent scoundrel, how dare you!"

"Scoundrel yourself, and to the devil with you!"

"What!"

An evil look blazed in the younger man's eyes; his face was livid.

"You hound!" he hissed, "if I were not a guest here and you a servant of the house I'd throw you down the stairs. Leave this room, and I'll report you to your master in the morning."

"And I'll report you too," said the other. "I'll report you as an impostor; you're no more Cyril Roylance than I am, whoever you may be. You might have forgotten the dog's name, you might have forgotten his breed, but you could never have lost the scar he left upon your neck when I throttled that bull-terrier off and saved young Cyril's life, and you couldn't have lost the scar on the left forehead that the doctor said Cyril Roylance would carry from the day he fell down our brass-bound stairs to the day of his death."

The other man stood silent! He was remembering that the man who had lain there face upwards on the railway-carriage floor carried upon his forehead the scar of an old wound—besides the new ones! When he had roused himself from his reverie the door was closed, Barker had gone!

What should he do? Mechanically he went to the door and, holding it ajar, listened to the man's retreating footsteps on his way downstairs, heard the pantry door open and shut. What should he do? Make a bolt for it then and there?

Clink! What was that? That sound of splintering glass and that tiny sound like the whistle of a very little saw. He drew a deep breath, his eyes dilated. Crossing the room on tiptoe, he switched off the electric light and waited. Presently a window was raised, a shutter swung back, muffled footsteps moved stealthily around the apartment, and a disc of light fluttered like a butterfly here and there. Dodging this disc, he crept back to the switch bracket; in an instant the room was flooded with white light, and two men with terrified faces made a rush towards that open window, through which the night air came in sweet and cold.

"Hush, you fools!" he whispered, and Barney Plumb ejaculated, hoarsely and excitedly:

"S'truth, it's Dick!"

"Yes," he replied, "you thought you'd work this job without your foreman—I knew!"

That was a lie, but the other two believed it, and wondered what there was he didn't know.

"Curse you," he went on; "didn't I tell you that you were to leave this job till I could work it with you?"

"Why, what's it matter, Dick, so long as we divides the pool?"

"But you never meant to divide, you meant to scoop the lot. I know my work, don't I?"

"None better, Dick."

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"And I've always a reason for what I do, haven't I?"

"That's right, matey."

"Well then, when I'm foreman mind you've got to carry out my orders, not to question them; but as it happens now's as good a time as any. Let's get to work."

"Where's the pick of the swag?" whispered Josh Branner; "there ain't much stuff 'ere 'ceptin' pictures, and our line ain't 'igh art."

He whispered to them. After a while they went out into the corridor and he waited there, listening to their footsteps as he had listened to Barker's, and in the same direction!

Presently the sounds died away, then there was silence save for the ticking of the huge hall clock downstairs and now and then the squeaking and scuttling of mice inside the old wainscotted walls.

Then his strained ears caught another sound like that of a quickly smothered cry, then of a scuffle and quickly of a fall, then, very faint, the sound of a groan. Then he heard a whisper.

"Dick, come on down!"

Kicking off his shoes, he descended into the cold and silent basement of the great house.

"We've had to put him through it," said Branner. "Barney's got him by the throat on the floor, but he's a handful. Come along quick, you're cleverer than Barney."

Some ten minutes later the three re-ascended the stairs carrying a huge bag.

"Heavy enough, ain't it?" whispered Josh.

"Not so heavy as—what we've left behind."

They reached the room through which they had entered.

"Where's the trap?" whispered Tiger Dick.

"Round the bend of the lane beyond the meadows."

"Well now, get away quick, and here—leave me that pistol!"

The pair clambered through the open window and down the rope ladder, which, when they had descended, Tiger Dick detached and threw down to them.

"Mind you give us ten minutes start!" That was their parting request.

He waited for a while, his head between his hands, his frame convulsed with violent agitation, a thin stream of blood trickling from his forehead. He partially undressed, and, carefully holding his handkerchief to the contusion on his forehead, got into bed.

He gave them a quarter of an hour; then, methodically, he sprang up and began pitching the furniture to and fro. He might have been a madman in a fit of frenzy, so strange were his antics. Tables, chairs, couch, washstand he turned them over, tugged at the bell and shouted "Help!"

He heard voices. Baug! bang! He fired the revolver through his own shirt sleeves, grazing with one bullet the skin of his forearm. Then he flung the revolver into a corner and threw himself across the overturned washstand.

"What's the little game?" he muttered.

Read "Dead to the World."

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"Quick! quick!" Harcourt Dale's voice sounded along the stairs, "they're in Mr. Roylance's room!"

He opened the door, turned on the light, then a cry of horror escaped him and the two menservants who followed him, for there lay the guest across a heap of débris, evidently, if not killed, badly hurt.

"The scoundrels!" groaned Harcourt Dale. "Look! they've fired point blank at him, quite close, his very clothing is singed, and see, he's bleeding from the forehead!"

"That's with the blow, sir," said the footman, "poor gentleman!" Then to the page-boy. "Here—give him some water!"

"Look here!" said their master stooping, "here's the revolver, three chambers discharged. Ring the alarm bell some of you—we'll arouse the countryside."

Doris, pale and trembling, came down in her dressing-gown and busied herself applying restoratives to the wounded guest. He opened his eyes dreamily with a sigh and fixed them on her face. The stake was worth winning at any risk, he said to himself.

The alarm bell clanged out harshly; then, attended by his servants, Harcourt Dale scoured the house to ascertain the further extent of the damage or loss.

In the butler's pantry they found the plate chest broken open and ransacked, and beside it Barker was lying in a heap. He was quite still, for he had died at his post, like the true man he was, defending his trust.

The tragic fate of his old servant grieved Harcourt Dale infinitely more than the loss of his plate, although just then such a loss was one that he could ill afford, and he reflected with a pang that that night, for the first time within his recollection, he had chidden him.

"Poor, poor fellow!" he sighed; "he served us well and faithfully, man and boy, for more than forty years, and now he has laid down his life for us. No battlefield ever witnessed a more loyal death. Oh! if we could only find a clue to the wretched man who did this thing!"

One of the servants following him up the wide oaken staircase, stooped, picked up something glittering yellow and handed it to her master.

It was the gold locket that his dead wife had given to their only child.

CHAPTER X.

Circumstantial Evidence.

Under ordinary circumstances Harcourt Dale would have made the finding of that trinket the occasion for a lecture on the iniquity of carelessness and the folly of wearing châtelaines and such like fal-lals which were always entangling themselves and their wearers with keys, door handles, door knobs, and what not. But in this instance he was far too overwhelmed by the tragic crime that had been committed under his roof tree to even make a note of the chance of giving Doris a scolding. He placed the locket in his waistcoat pocket, simply remarking:

"Thank you, Bell, it is from Miss Doris's châtelaine. It was her mother's, she'll be distressed at losing it and very relieved at its being found."

But there were the police arriving, details to be furnished, search parties to be organized, the doctor to be summoned post haste, so that, what with the bustle and excitement, to say nothing of the horror of it all, Harcourt Dale for the while clean forgot the finding of his daughter's locket. After due reverence had been awarded the dead, there was his wounded guest to be attended to.

"The wretches!" he exclaimed. "It is not their fault that we have not a double tragedy to deplore," and he gave Doris and the servants strict instructions that their injured visitor should receive every care.

In the dead of night, along the dark, deserted, silent roads and lanes a fast trotting pony, his feet cloth shod and muffled, tore along as though he, as well as the precious pair behind him, were eager to get as far away as could be from the scene of that night's wicked work.

"Josh!" whispered Plumb "we've done it this time."

"You're right," said the other, "best not to talk about it."

Jet black against the night sky over the bend of the upland they saw the gables of an old farmhouse.

"That's the place," whispered Branner, "do you think it's safe to stop, hadn't we better make haste and get away as quick as we can?"

"No," said the other firmly, "Dick's plan's the best, and we shall get away quicker in the long run by stopping here."

They turned down a narrow grass-grown lane, there halted their horse, and alighted, and scrambling over a five-barred gate in the shadow of the hedgerows, made their way to the kitchen gardens belonging to the Abbey Farm, and so at length they came to a grass plot studded with tiny flower beds under an old-fashioned lattice window, twinkling in the fitful moonlight just under the eaves of the quaint old thatched roof. And very deliberately Josh Branner marked his footprints in the pliant soil of the flower bed nearest that window, and quietly, but deliberately, scraped the mud from the heavy boots on the sill beneath.

And meantime, Barney Plumb, stooping, took an iron instrument from his jacket pocket.

"Curse it," he said, wiping his hand inside his coat, "it's still wet." Then he thrust it, still wet as it was, as far as his outstretched arm would reach, inside that clump of laurels. From the farm buildings beyond came a deep, ominous growl, then suddenly the rattling of a chain and a clamorous vehement barking, and Messrs. Plumb and Branner, with a frightened look behind them, sped for their lives along the garden and the meadow, never pausing till, breathless, they reached the trap waiting there in the grass-grown lane, for the big, deep-mouthed baying of the mastiff had been taken up by the full, frequent bark of a retriever, and a couple of terriers had in a second sprung up to add their sharper and even more excitable clamour to the alarm.

"What on earth's that?" exclaimed Jack Branscombe, "a fox marauding the henroosts! What a thundering row the dogs are making, confound them! And I was just dreaming of Doris. Hang it! they're keeping it up and old Bendigo's straining at his chain. Perhaps I'd better go and see what's the matter, it's only fair when the dogs give tongue like that to answer them."

Partially dressing, and in lieu of coat taking a thick ulster from a wardrobe close to hand, he stole gently downstairs lest he should wake and alarm his housekeeper and maidservant. He went out into the stable-yard and the mastiff's angry baying gave way to more joyful greetings.

"Down! down! lie down, Bendigo, quiet Neptune! Hold your row, you imps!" to the terriers. Then more in curiosity than caution he strolled round and glanced at the byres and barns and into the cattle shed, thinking that possibly some poor wretch of a tramp might have sought a night's shelter. But no, there was no sign even of any wayfarer who, knowing Jack's tolerance, had sought a night's rest in his sheds. Feeling now thoroughly awake he lit a pipe, walked across to the fold gate, and glanced up and down the high road. No! A fox or hare must have made a short cut across the place, he concluded, and as it wanted a good three hours to daylight he determined to go back to bed. Before doing so, however, he strolled round to the front of the house, glanced at the door and windows, then went round again.

Is your photo on page 562?

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And just as he turned the corner, Ned Fletcher, trudging along in the direction of a certain coppice, which, guessing something of the movements of his former associates, he was watching, glanced casually over the moss-grown wall dividing the Abbey Farmhouse's pretty flower garden from the road.

"Who's that?" he muttered, suddenly pausing, "why it's young Jack Branscombe! What in the name o' wonder is the lad prowling about there for? Dang it! if 'twere not his own house one 'ud think he was after breaking into it, but that's no business o' mine. I mun hurry along, or else the lads will have drawn the coppice."

Meantime, Jack Branscombe, having convinced himself that all was safe, going round to the back of the house, quietly let himself in. There was still time for a few hours rest, and he wanted a clear head for the next day, because he had a lot to do, and it was work that as a rule laymen hadn't much experience in, even such as had finding as a rule one experience last a lifetime. A few hours later he went down to breakfast.

"Did you hear the dogs barking last night, sir?" inquired Nannie, the good old housekeeper who looked after him like a mother.

"Oh, yes," he said, "that's all right. You say everything's quite ready? That's right, tell Jack to put the dogcart to, I'm going to——"

Before the word "town" had left his lips he stopped himself.

"I'm going to see some people on business. I may not be back to-night."

"Really, sir, but suppose any letters come?"

"They'll have to wait."

"And suppose anyone calls on business?"

"They'll have to wait too. The business I'm going on, Nannie, just now, is to me the most important in the world."

Then she observed that he had brought down his kit bag already packed. Finishing a hasty breakfast, he hurried out along the front garden to where his dogcart stood waiting in the road, flung the rug off the mare's back, took the reins from the lad in the cart, and shouted to the other at her head, "Let her go!"

"Steady, mare! How long before we shall see you again, sir?" inquired this latter, giving the mare her head.

"Can't say!" he shouted with a laugh, little guessing how long. "Good lass," and he set the mare bowling along the road, for he meant to catch the 10.15 and he did it.

CHAPTER XI.

A Strange Reticence.

Greatly to the relief of everyone at the Grange, the guest's injuries were trifling, with perhaps the exception of that contusion on the forehead, and even that required no more drastic treatment than the liberal application of vinegar and water, a little arnica, and a composing draught, and at noon the next day the patient was in quite his normal condition and as interested and active as any in discussing and formulating the steps to be taken with a view of the hunting down of the culprits.

It was he who increased the reward Harcourt Dale immediately offered for the apprehension of the murderers.

And when the proof of that bill headed in big black letters, MURDER! TWO HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD!! reeking and malodorous from the local printer's galley was placed in his hand, there was something almost approaching a smile in the lines of the hard mouth under the black moustache which was growing so swiftly and strongly, for he was wondering if such a thing had ever happened before as a man offering a reward for his own apprehension, and the contin-

ANÆMIA

Mrs. Gertrude Morley, of Crown Street, Awsworth, Ilkeston, suffered from Anæmia from being eighteen years of age. Speaking of her condition, she says:—"I always felt tired and weary, worn-out, and miserable. I lost all power to digest my food, and became so emaciated that I could only walk a few steps at a time, holding on to the furniture to support me. I began to take Bile Beans, and the result has been marvellous. In a few short months they completely cured me. I am now in the enjoyment of perfect health, and the other day I walked eight miles with ease!"

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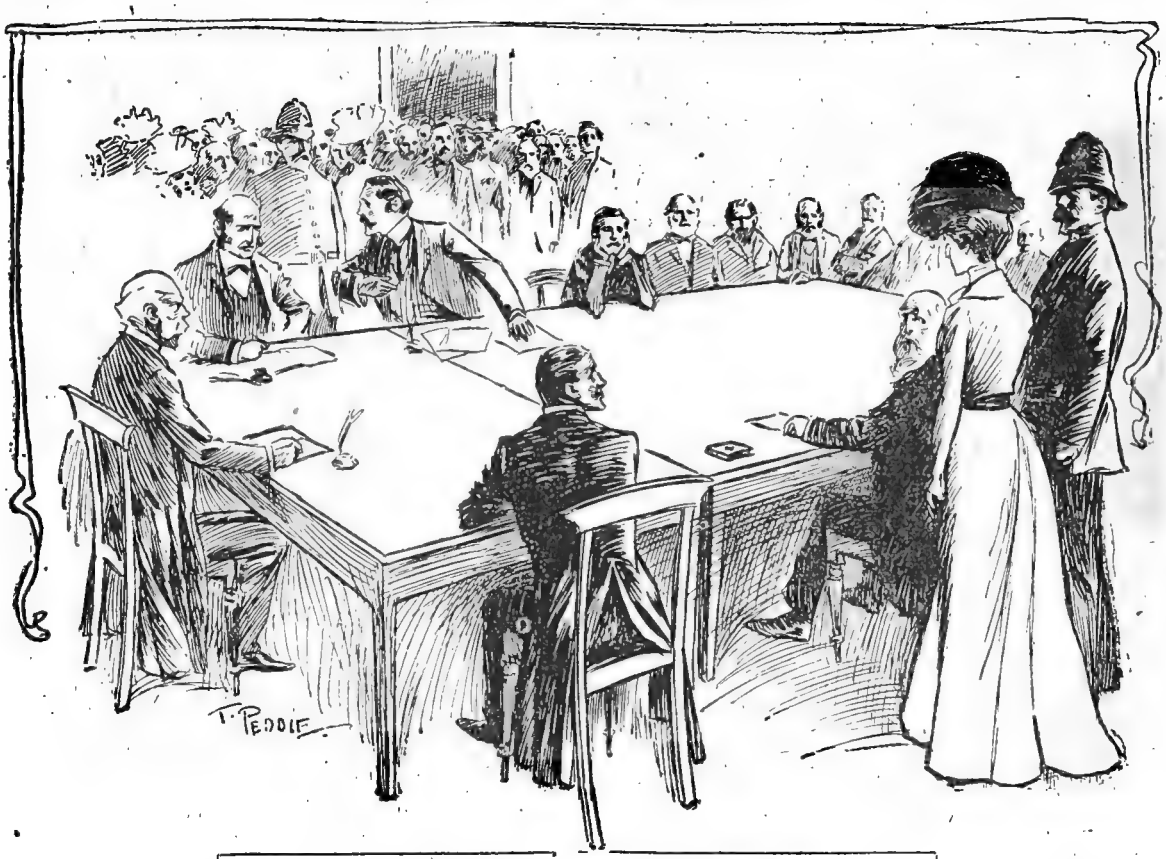

"I gave it to Mr. John Branscombe, of the Abbey Farm."

gency of his having to sign a cheque for the moiety of that reward appealed to his sense of humour. A soft, white vision entered the room. It was Doris, her beautiful face in keeping with her white morning gown, her eyes bright with recent tears, for she had loved the dear old retainer who had carried her in his strong, trusty arms a tiny baby, had taught her her first steps and to ride her first pony. Doris Dale was an English gentlewoman from the sole of her tiny foot to the crown of her golden head, and, accordingly, her old servants were her old friends.

"Are you quite recovered now, Mr. Roylance?" she asked, and a shudder thrilled her frame as she read the letters gleaming big and black on the damp sheet in his hands: MURDER!

"Oh, I'm quite fit, thanks," he replied, "that is except that, of course, it has been an awful jar to me. The dear old chap you know was so good to me when I was a little fellow, and I thought such a lot of him, was so glad to meet him and talk over those very, very early days, and then for this to happen to him just after our meeting again."

"I know, I know," she said, "and I'm so sorry for you."

"Ah, that's very tender and sweet of you. Do you know, Doris, I can't get out of the old way of calling you by that name, it makes a man feel good the very thought of a dear little woman like you taking an interest in him. Oh, Doris, if I could only hope——"

"Oh, no, no," she said hurriedly, "you mustn't talk like that or think like that. Of course I like you, Cyril. I've always remembered you and liked you as my first child playmate, and, of course, I hope we shall always be friends, but you must never think of anything more than that."

"Doris," he said, fixing upon her a glance that seemed to envelope and to burn. "Strength is my keynote. I'm not a good man, I'm not a great man. I've been told that in a way I'm a clever man" (even as he spoke there flitted through his brain the dim remembrance of a stern-faced man sitting in a wig and gown high up under a canopy adorned with the Royal arms angrily admonishing him on the mis-application of natural talents). "Doris, I'm strong, iron strong, strong in my likes, my dislikes, my love, my hate, most of all in my determination. No, no, most of all now in my love for you, and when a man loves as I do you might just as well tell the tide not to flow or ebb, or the wind not to blow, or the rain not to fall, you might as well tell the moon and the stars not to shine, as tell that man not to think of the passion that has set his very soul aflame."

"I can't hear you, I won't hear you," she said. "Oh, Cyril! since we are friends, spare yourself and spare me pain. Tell me," she went on, changing the subject, "those terrible creatures who attacked you last night, how many were there?"

"Two," he said.

"The cowards! What a mercy that in their haste,

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Photo Competition.

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HYPNOTISM

THE SCIENCE OF SUCCESS

Reader, have you ever stopped to consider why some persons are so successful; why everything they touch seems to turn to gold; why they acquire wealth, position, power and influence without any seemingly great effort on their part? Such persons surround themselves with friends, are honoured and respected in their communities; are sought after in society, and gain prominence and distinction without apparently trying. Have you ever considered these things? Do you know why?

WHAT BRINGS SUCCESS

Not hard work, for the poor work harder than the rich. Not birth, because many of our successful men are of lowly parentage. Not luck, for many a lucky man dies friendless and poor. We will tell you why. The secret of success in life is personal influence—the ability to make others think as you do; to win their confidence and friendship and get them to help you. There is a secret power by which you can wield an irresistible personal influence; by which you may overcome all obstacles, charm and fascinate whom you will; by which you may cure every known disease and bad habit without the aid of drugs, medicines or the surgeon's knife. It is called personal Magnetism or Hypnotism. It is the basis of success in every business and calling.

A GOD-GIVEN POWER

It is a God-given power that is the heritage of the poor as well as the rich. It is truly the wonder science of the age. Consider what it means to be able to convince a man that your goods are the best on the market, that your services are invaluable to him, that you are offering to him a good investment, that he needs what you have to sell, that your opinion is correct, that he should act upon your advice, and a thousand other things of this kind. Consider what an advantage such a power would give you. If you wish to secure a good paying position, obtain an increase in salary, or add to your present income in any way, a knowledge of hypnotism will prove invaluable. In hundreds of instances it has been the turning point in the lives of people who were ready to give up in despair—for whom the future seemed to have no hope.

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and no doubt in their terror, for I am sure you are very brave, they fired wide. Not very wide, but oh! what a mercy it is to think of the old saying of a miss being as good as a mile. Cyril, do you think they'll catch them?"

"I can't quite say?"

"Of course, you hope they will?"

"Well, really!" he said hesitatingly.

"Oh! what a generous nature you are!" she exclaimed impulsively, feeling that, though she never could love him, she really did like him. "But that cruel man who struck you that fearful blow on the forehead?"

"Oh, well, yes!" said he, diving his hands in his pockets and pacing the room studying intently the pattern of the carpet. "At the time I did feel very angry with him. May I light a cigarette?"

"Oh, yes," she said. "But, Cyril, don't you hope they'll both be caught?"

Suddenly he came to a dead stop, wheeled round and faced her.

"No!" he said abruptly, almost defiantly, "no; to tell you the truth I do not."

"But, Cyril, why?" she asked with a puzzled expression, "such monsters when at large are living dangers to honest folks."

"I know, I know; still, I have my reasons."

"How strange," she said, "few would be so forgiving. Cyril, tell me, did you see their faces?"

"One of them clearly," he said.

"Would you know him again?"

"Anywhere."

"Had you ever seen him before?" she asked with growing excitement.

"Yes," he replied, folding his arms, "and that is why, notwithstanding that I have offered that reward, I hope he will escape."

"Cyril, what do you mean; who is he, do I know him?"

"Yes," he answered; "it was for your sake I let him go, for I think I could have held him."

"Oh, Cyril, name him—denounce him; let his name and his infamy ring throughout the countryside, through the length and breadth of the land."

"No, no!" he answered, his face set and stern, and she, bewildered, cried:

"Then in the name of common sense and common justice, why?"

He drew himself to his full height, looked her full in the face, and said in a clear and ringing voice:

"For your own sake."

Then he turned and walked from the room, leaving her amazed.

"What can he mean?" she asked. "Oh! the excitement and perhaps that terrible blow must for the while have injured his brain. And yet he seemed so certain. Oh, dear! dear! my own brain is in a whirl. Heaven send these dark days will soon be over."

CHAPTER XII.

A Verdict of "Wilful Murder."

An air of unwonted bustle and importance pervaded the precincts of the Seven Bells, the principal hostelry in Dalehurst village. The very ostlers, hissing as they scrubbed and rubbed their patient charges, wrinkled their brows with portentous gravity, and ever and anon paused to unbend their backs and gaze wonderingly at the balconied windows of the big room up there. The stable yard was crowded with a variety of vehicles, from the broughams of county magistrates to the cart of the village carrier, and, not only in the loose boxes, but outside the stable doors were tethered various steeds, from the trimly clipped and groomed hacks of gentleman farmers to the packman's shaggy pony and the hawker's donkey.

That big room up there inside the balconied windows was crowded as never before in its history. The jury had been empanelled, had elected their foreman, the coroner's officer had gabbled over the charges, beginning "Oyez, oyez, oyez," and the twelve good men and true had settled down to the task of inquiring into the circumstances touching the death of John William Barker, late of Dalehurst Grange, manservant.

At the press table reporters, armed with sheaves of pointed pencils, were waiting eager as greyhounds in the leash, and there at the back of the room twice as many persons as there was comfortable room for were penned like sheep in a fold. The staircases and corridors, too, were thronged, and the management and the staff of the Seven Bells moved to and fro with the gravity and importance of those who felt that the eyes of the world were upon them.

In a private sitting-room on the other side of the house Doris Dale sat with her maid. It had been deemed advisable for her to be in attendance at hand in case of need, though it was not expected that her evidence would be required.

The Squire of Fallowfield was there, deep in converse with Harcourt Dale and Detective-Inspector Rossiter of the C.I.D., and once or twice, when Harcourt Dale returned to Doris, the master of Fallowfield Hall and the eminent detective hob-nobbed very confidentially and seriously over a glass of the best port that could be found in the Seven Bells' cellar, greatly to the perturbation of Morgan Chandler, who, also loitering about the premises, watched askance the *tête-à-tête* with uneasiness.

"What's the little game?" he muttered. "What's he so chummy with the tec. for. Perhaps it's all right, and it's only this Dalehurst Grange job they're palavering about; only it seemed to me once or twice the detective's eyes were following me, I could sort of feel them on me. I suppose it's only to-day's matter they're discussing, but if it was something else it might be a bit awkward. Hullo, Ned, have a glass of anything?"

"No thank you, sir, I've got to drive over to the telegraph office for the master."

"Will you take a glass of anything, Ned?" said Chandler, who, since Fletcher had been promoted very much into the position of confidential messenger to his master, had exchanged his attitude of tyrannical bully towards the man, after the fashion of his type, and had adopted a policy of conciliation.

"Thank 'ee, Mr. Chandler, can't stop," replied Ned.

"Something important, I suppose? What's it all about, and what's the guv'nor talking so serious to the man from Scotland Yard about. Do you happen to know?"

"Well, I do happen to know," replied Ned Fletcher, "only, like this telegram, it happens to be private. Good-day," and with a nod and grin, which expressed unutterable defiance and contempt, Ned hurried out to where the smart dogcart was waiting, and, seizing the reins and scrambling up into the seat, within a few seconds was spinning along the high road in the direction of the nearest market town.

"Excuse me half-a-minute, Mr Roylance," said Inspector Rossiter, perusing one of the telegrams Ned Fletcher, who had been detailed for that service, had brought him, "I've got a little matter to attend to."

"Certainly," said the Squire, strolling away and leaving the detective wrinkling his brows over the pink flimsy in his fingers.

(To be continued.)

Read "Dead to the World."

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

WHAT a lot of money everybody has! It must be so since so many of our £5 notes are going begging. We offer five each week, but in no one week have the whole lot been claimed. Consequently, I can only conclude that money is so plentiful that a mere "fiver" is not worth sending for.

On page 562 you will find another batch of photos, and unless you have a plethora of riches, I should recommend you to see immediately if your portrait is among them. And even though you are a millionaire, you may as well send for the money. It will do to buy your wife a new bonnet. I am authoritatively informed that quite a nice one can be got for £5.

In connection with the third batch of portraits two £5 notes have been claimed. Here are the names and addresses of the successful claimants:

MR. P. INSALL (No. 13),
4 The Parade,
Acton Green, W.

MRS. BLAKE (No. 14),
49 Rupert Street,
Reading.

❦❦❦

ADVICE TO READERS ON VARIOUS MATTERS.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

"WHY do so many clergymen suffer from sore throats?" asks "Curate." According to an eminent specialist in throat diseases, the trouble is mainly caused by the habit of hanging the head. The orator who directs his remarks to the bottom button of his waistcoat is almost certain to have a sore throat. The Bar looks up to the Bench: barristers seldom have clergyman's sore throat. But the clergyman in reading the prayers looks down upon his book; his chin is upon his chest. When he preaches, his eyes are still upon his manuscript or looking downwards at his congregation. Let him lift his eyes, praying with diligent observation of the roof, and preaching, in a physical sense, to the gallery, and he will escape the great clerical malady.

"TYRO" suffers from a very common complaint—that of feeling uncomfortable and ill at ease when in the society of people with whom he is not intimately acquainted. He always feels afraid to join in a conversation for fear of saying something stupid, and he asks me to give him a few hints as to how to overcome the difficulty.

The art of conversation is rather a natural than an acquired accomplishment, but "Tyro" can easily do a good deal to remedy his deficiencies in this respect. It does not require much ingenuity to think of something suitable to say upon ordinary topics. Do not, however, imagine that much talking is necessarily a good thing; there must be good listeners as well as good talkers, and there are rather too few of the former and too many of the latter. At the same time, it does not do to sit still as if one had not an idea in one's head. If "Tyro" makes an effort to conquer his reserve, he will soon gain confidence.

"LOVER" writes complaining of his "ownest own," as I have no doubt he sometimes calls her. It appears that whenever they have a slight disagreement she weeps, and he does not like this, because he has to give in at once. "Lover" thinks her conduct shows weakness. I don't; in my opinion—of course, I am quite inexperienced—the young lady is remarkably clever. She knows quite well that were she to return anger for anger, the little rift might soon become a serious affair. Therefore, she adopts what is undoubtedly the most powerful weapon in the feminine armoury—tears—with the result that the poor male thing is completely subjugated and brought to repentance. In these days, when certain distorted feminines delight in aping the manners of mankind, "Lover" ought to be devoutly thankful that he is beloved by a womanly woman.

IT is "L. L." who asks this question, "Are warm baths beneficial?" to which I reply decidedly in the affirmative. Warm baths will often prevent the most virulent diseases. A person who may be in fear of having received infection of any kind should take a warm bath, suffer perspiration to ensue, and then rub dry. He should dress warmly to guard against taking cold. If the system has imbibed any infectious matter, it will be removed by resorting to the warm bath if the latter is taken before the infection has had time to spread over the system; and even if some time has elapsed, the drenching perspiration that may be induced by hot water will be very likely to remove it. In cases of congestion, bilious colic, inflammation, etc., there is no remedy more certain to give relief than a hot bath.

IN reply to "BILL," before a man can drive a cab for public hire he is compelled to pass an examination at Scotland Yard in regard to his knowledge of London. His examination, like most others, is rapidly becoming more difficult, and is conducted in the following manner: A commissioner sits with a map before him, and the would-be extorter of big fares is asked through what streets he would pass if he were to proceed from certain points to other places. For example, he is asked, "Supposing you were to drive from London Bridge to Paddington, how would you go?" Cabbies complain that this is an unfair test, as plenty of people know their way about without being able to name the streets through which they pass.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I AM open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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